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ABSTRACT

A study conducted by Public Agenda Foundation, in partnership with the National Constitution Center, examined what typical adults know and believe about the U.S. Constitution, probed what they understand their rights and civic responsibilities to be, and reported their views on the document's importance and relevance in their lives today. The centerpiece of the study was a national telephone survey conducted in July 2002 among a random sample of adults (n=1520). The survey was preceded by six focus groups conducted in sites across the country as well as 18 in-depth interviews with legal scholars and others who are engaged in constitutional issues. The survey was commissioned before, but conducted after, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Findings suggest there is fertile ground for nurturing serious education on the Constitution. This report is divided into eight sections: (10 "Introduction"; (2) "Finding One: A Measured Pride"; (3) "Finding Two: It Goes without Saying;" (4) "Finding Three: The Balancing Act"; (5) "Finding Four: Protecting Our Rights in Perilous Times"; (6) "Finding Five: Other Threats to Freedom"; (7) "Finding Six: The Responsibilities of Citizenship"; and (8) "Afterword" (Deborah Wadsworth). Includes 34 endnotes. Also contains information on methodology, survey results, and lists related publications. (BT)

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Knowing It By Heart: Americans Consider the Constitution and Its Meaning. A Report by Public Agenda for the National Constitution Center.

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Americans Consider the Constitution and its Meaning

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A Report by Public Agenda for the National Constitution Center

By Steve Farkas, Jean Johnson and Ann Duffett

With Leslie Wilson and Jackie Vine

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ABOUT PUBLIC AGENDA

Founded in 1975 by social scientist and author Daniel Yankelovich and former U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance, Public Agenda works to help the nation's leaders better understand the public's point of view and to help average citizens better understand critical policy issues. Our in-depth research on how citizens think about policy forms the basis for extensive citizen education work. Our citizen education materials, used by the National Issues Forums and media outlets across the country, have won praise for their credibility and fairness from elected officials from both political parties and from experts and decision-makers across the political spectrum. Our Web site, Public Agenda Online, provides comprehensive information on a wide range of public opinion and public policy issues.

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Most Americans understand more about the Constitution than many give them credit for. While they have a hazy recall of the specifics, the vast majority have absorbed the basic principles of the Constitution and convey broad acceptance of them. Most say that rights come with limits and responsibilities, and they voice a respect and understanding for the legal process. While majorities admit not knowing the basics of the Constitution, most Americans say it is "absolutely essential" for Americans to have a thorough knowledge of it.

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Americans strongly believe that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. People say failing to vote or show up for jury duty are serious examples of neglecting civic duty. Although young people in America are less likely to vote—and more likely to accept excuses for not voting—they show more concern about issues of due process. Schools get mixed reviews for their approach to teaching the Constitution; senior citizens seem to have had a more interesting learning experience as schoolchildren than their younger counterparts.

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INTRODUCTION

By Joseph M. Torsella
CEO and President, National Constitution Center

For more than 200 years the American Constitution has served as much more than a framework of government. Belief in the great document's magisterial guarantees of freedom, justice, and equality has come to define what it means to be an American. From 1787 to today, in times of both tragedy and triumph, Americans have anchored themselves to the Constitution.

But what does the Constitution stand for in the minds of contemporary Americans? How do we interpret its timeless guarantees in terms of today's issues? How do we understand and how well do we appreciate the document's meaning for our lives in 2002? The present survey was undertaken to begin to answer those questions.

This survey was commissioned before, but conducted after, the terrorist attacks of September 2001. And so, although this result was unplanned for, it sheds important new light on the post-9/11 political landscape. Few disagree that the September 11 attacks have changed the balance that Americans had struck between security and liberty. But where precisely does the new balance lie? At a time when the limits of liberty are hotly contested, it is especially important to develop precise and subtle knowledge of the public's understanding of constitutional values and how they should be applied.

Fundamental Beliefs

Even in ordinary times, however, knowing the public's views of the Constitution is an essential ingredient in democratic decision-making. No set of beliefs is more fundamental to framing and understanding debates over a wide range of current questions. We would do well to remember, as the great Chief Justice John Marshall reminds us: "The people made the Constitution, and the people can unmake it. It is the creature of their own will, and lives only by their will."

This survey was commissioned by the National Constitution Center (NCC) as part of the Center's ongoing programs to promote active, informed citizenship.

The Constitution Heritage Act of 1988 created the NCC in order to help Americans better understand the freedoms they have and the role they play in the world's most successful experiment in democracy. Over the years, the Center has accomplished this educational mission through a wide variety of outreach programs and publications for both students and adults. Beginning July 4, 2003, the Center will expand its profile by opening the first-ever interactive museum dedicated to the Constitution, its history, and its influence on our lives today. Currently under construction in Independence National Historic Park in Philadelphia, this 160,000 square-foot facility is located just two blocks away from Independence Hall, where the Constitution was drafted and signed. The museum pays homage not only to the 39 men who signed the charter, but also to the countless men and women throughout American history who have helped author the story of "We the People." More than a museum, the new building will serve as a center of increased outreach programming, including curriculum partnerships with schools around the country, a teacher institute, nationally broadcast lectures and debates, and a home for visiting scholars. For those unable to visit the Center, a redesigned website will serve as a gateway to "all things constitutional."

But what does the Constitution stand for in the minds of contemporary Americans? How do we interpret its timeless guarantees in terms of today's issues?

It is within this overall context that the NCC has partnered with Public Agenda to conduct research about the public's attitudes about the Constitution. The present survey was designed to establish a baseline of the American public's view of the Constitution. Analysis of its results will help us develop new exhibits and programs that engage and inform the public. Future surveys will probe further, measure changes, and add more detail to the picture drawn herein in broad strokes.

Past polls by the NCC and others have documented gaps in the public's constitutional literacy. This survey does not contradict those findings, but it does give us perhaps more reason to be hopeful. It suggests that despite deficiencies in specific knowledge, the public is keenly interested in, and willing to be engaged by, constitutional issues and debate. If the text of the Constitution is captured imprecisely in people's heads, its principles and values are alive and well in their hearts.

In conducting focus groups to frame the present survey, we discovered a hunger for such knowledge about the Constitution, as well as a concern that the document's precepts are not being taught well enough at home or in school. Unless the Constitution's meaning is communicated to the young, a woman in Frisco, Texas, told us, "you're going to see generation after generation of these things being forgotten. They're not going to be practiced; our rights are not going to be there because they aren't going to know what they are."

A Hunger for Knowledge

In our system, constitutional issues are often contested issues—from abortion to school vouchers, affirmative-action to election reform, gun-ownership to capital punishment. And any effort to capture contemporary understandings of the Constitution will, of necessity, explore controversial matters. It is important to note, however, that neither the NCC nor Public Agenda takes a position on the specific issues raised in the poll questions and scenarios (or indeed on any other current policy question). Nor do we take a position in the lively ongoing debate over the nature of constitutional interpretation. The purpose of this document is to report views, not to endorse them.

The NCC is pleased to be working with Public Agenda in the first phase of this research project. Like most Public Agenda research, *Knowing It by Heart* grows out of a multilayered process that began with a review of existing survey work focusing on the Constitution and American history. Public Agenda also conducted a series of one-on-one interviews with legal scholars, attorneys, educators and others who are engaged in constitutional issues, and six focus groups with Americans in different regions across the country. The centerpiece of the study was a national telephone survey conducted in July 2002 among a random sample of 1,520 adults. The methodology section of this report includes detailed information about how the study was conducted.

If the text of the Constitution is captured imprecisely in people's heads, its principles and values are alive and well in their hearts.

Improving Civic Dialogue

We hope that this survey helps to bolster the quality of public discourse in America, by grounding debate in solid research on what citizens themselves believe and on how they think about reconciling the tensions of a free society. We hope as well that the survey begins to move debate about popular constitutional knowledge away from complaints about the lack of understanding and civic engagement, and toward a discussion of what can be done about it.

Increasing such knowledge and fostering such engagement is our mission, one in which we hope others will join. Doing so will help to secure the "blessings of liberty" for our posterity, as the Framers sought to secure it for theirs. For as Chief Justice Earl Warren once remarked, "[T]he day to day job of upholding the Constitution really lies…realistically, on the shoulders of every citizen."

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FINDING ONE: A MEASURED PRIDE

Americans believe that the United States is one of the most democratic nations on earth, and their faith in the country and its founding principles is solid. But many also readily concede the country's imperfections and mistakes. Most people believe that the Constitution's promise of individual rights and freedoms is intended for all, but at the same time they acknowledge it is not so easy for all people to take advantage of it.

Americans may be willing to criticize the country and its leaders around the water cooler and at the kitchen table, but at heart, most Americans take immense pride in our country's freedoms and the ideals America represents. Fifty-two percent believe that the United States will be remembered by historians as the single most democratic and free nation in the world, and another 34% say it will be "right up there with the best of them." Only a handful (6%) think that history will look back on this country as falling "far short" compared to others.

"I Wouldn't Want to Live Anyplace Else in the World, Honestly"

"My opinion is it's the greatest country in the world," a young man from California said in one of the focus groups conducted for the project. "We obviously have our own problems, but there's no country that's exempt from that. I wouldn't want to live anyplace else in the world, honestly."

Most Americans are also confident that the basic principles of individual rights are being realized today. By a margin of more than 2 to 1, most people think of the United States as "a country where rights are guaranteed and it's easy for people to exercise them," not a place where rights are on "shaky ground" (65% vs. 31%).

A Great Document

As a whole, the American public recognizes the Constitution as a document that sets an expansive goal of freedom, and they are not cynical about its overarching purpose. Historians and constitutional scholars sometimes remind us of the limitations of the original document—especially its compromise on slavery—but according to typical Americans "We the People" refers to all Americans, regardless of race, gender or creed.

A Country to Be Proud Of

In the future, when the United States is compared to other nations in terms of being democratic and free, do you think it will be remembered as the MOST democratic and free, that it was right up there with the best of them, that it did not stand out, or that it fell far short?

% of respondents who say:	General Public	White	African American	Hispanic
The most democratic and free	52	52	51	61
Right up there with the best of them	34	36	28	24
Did not stand out	4	4	5	1
Fell far short	6	4	13	9

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Virtually all (91%) believe that the Constitution's fundamental purpose is "to protect and serve the interests of all people, regardless of their wealth or power;" only 8% say it is meant to cater to the rich or powerful. Even when reminded that, as originally adopted, the Constitution effectively excluded women and African Americans in its protections, 76% of the general public still describe it as "a great document that had some blind-spots" rather than one that is "fundamentally flawed or racist" (11%). "Obviously there are some things in it that aren't perfect, but we can say we're all equal…that's where we start with our rights," said a man from Frisco, TX.

Standing for Something Special

Some might question these findings, pointing out that Americans may be feeling extraordinarily patriotic on the heels of the September 11 terrorist attacks and the ongoing war against terrorism. But according to a Pew Research Center poll conducted in 1999, 85% of Americans think that "our Constitution" is a major reason for America's success.[1] And findings from a survey conducted by Public Agenda in 1998 suggest that these positive sentiments are longstanding. In *A Lot To Be Thankful For: What Parents Want Children To Learn About America*, 84% of the parents surveyed agreed that, "The U.S. is a unique country that stands for something special in the world." Just 13% said the United States is just another country whose system is no better or worse than others.[2]

It's not uncommon in public opinion polls to find majorities of Americans unhappy with politicians or dissatisfied with the government's handling of a particular problem. But when it comes to the way they feel about the country itself, these findings suggest that Americans have great pride in America and its principles—a pride laced with realism and tempered by modesty.

We began many of our focus groups with the question, "Do you think of America as a successful country?" The responses, foreshadowing the survey, indicated that typical Americans do not see the United States through rose-colored glasses. Along with the outpouring of positive feelings they had about our country's successes, its imperfections and past mistakes readily came to mind. "The government is not perfect, and they're not always trustworthy," said a man from Connecticut. "But the fleas come with the dog…No government will ever be perfect."

A Country with Flaws

Ideally, do you think that the fundamental purpose of the Constitution is to protect and serve the interests of all people, regardless of their wealth or power or to protect and serve the interests of people who are powerful or rich?

% of respondents who say:	General Public	White	African American	Hispanic
Protect and serve all people	91%	93%	77%	84%
Protect and serve those who are powerful or rich	8%	6%	21%	16%

And in reality, would you say that all citizens actually have the same rights and freedoms offered in the Constitution, or that citizens who are rich or powerful have more of them?

% of respondents who say:	General Public	White	African American	Hispanic
All citizens have the same	34%	36%	22%	39%
Citizens who are rich or powerful have more	65%	62%	76%	58%

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Money Matters

Most Americans seem to believe that despite the best of intentions, enjoying our country's benefits and protections seems to be far easier for some than for others. In the real world, people seem to be saying, there are some who get the red carpet treatment and others who get the short end of the stick. Although 9 in 10 (91%) believe that the Constitution—*in the ideal*—is supposed to protect and serve all people, almost 2 out of 3 (65%) say that—*in reality*—citizens who are rich or powerful have more rights and freedoms than others. What's more, according to more than half of Americans, the goals of the Constitution remain unmet when so many citizens face economic hardship; 57% agree that "as long as so many Americans are poor or homeless, our nation has failed to live up to its ideals" (39% strongly agree).

Time and again, we heard people talk about the advantages of wealth and how those without adequate means or connections have a harder time exercising their "guaranteed" rights. "If you are poor it's harder to really achieve and realize those dreams of traveling and having your voice heard and going to school," commented a young Hispanic woman in California. "Because you have to work so hard just to have a roof over your head and food on your table."

Many focus group participants also believe that money taints the criminal justice system, even though anyone charged with a crime is represented regardless of ability to pay. A Dayton, Ohio, man who had recently served on a jury described what he had seen: "The guy couldn't afford a lawyer; he had a public defender. If he had money, he wouldn't have went to jail. It takes money to have representation. He went to jail because he was poor." Although rights may be promised to everyone, Americans broadly say that the fulfillment of these rights often depends on circumstances.

"I Believe It Will Probably Get Better"

Given the past and present history of African Americans in this country, one might expect this group to be doubtful about America's commitment to individual rights and freedoms for all. But while some may feel this way, the overwhelming majority of African Americans (77%) has faith in the Constitution and believes its main purpose is to protect and serve all people—in spite of its imperfect beginnings. In a focus group in Philadelphia with African Americans, one woman said, "We've been blessed...coming from where we came from, thinking about our history, how we were treated...but everything is not as bad as it was. I believe it will probably get better...We have a voice now, and I feel that we all can make a difference."

...But We're Not There Yet

Still, for many African Americans, a discussion of the good intentions of the Constitution is incomplete without a corresponding discussion about the legacy of racism in the United States. In the focus group, many spoke not only about historical inequalities but also about the slights and injustices they confront in their current daily lives. "It's really unbelievable how you can have the money to move somewhere in the neighborhood and people feel that you don't have the right to be there," commented an African American woman. "We should have the right to live where we want to live. We have scuffled, scraped and earned our way to get there. We should have the right to stay there and raise our children in the same environment that anybody else wants to, because that's what it's all about—the right to raise your children in a good environment."

Most Americans seem to believe that despite the best of intentions, enjoying our country's benefits and protections seems to be far easier for some than for others.

Thus it's not surprising that when it comes to "the right to live your life the way you choose," African Americans are considerably less likely than white Americans to say things are okay the way they are (53% vs. 70%). African Americans also are more likely than white Americans to say that in reality, citizens who are rich or powerful have more rights and freedoms than others (76% vs. 62%). And while most African Americans do not hold this view, they are more than three times as likely as white Americans to view the Constitution as a flawed or racist document (28% vs. 8%) and to think that its fundamental purpose is "to

protect and serve the interests of people who are powerful or rich" (21% vs. 6%).

In one focus group, a young man whose family is from India pointed to the color of his skin and argued that money and race often dictate how much freedom a person has: "Freedoms, they don't always apply to all the same people here. If you're a minority in the inner city, you don't have the same rights. Suppose you're a rich white person in a white neighborhood, you're going to have a lot more advantages off the bat." In Philadelphia, an African American woman shared her feelings about the Constitution: "To me, being a black female, some [of it] doesn't pertain to me even though I'm in this country and I'm an American citizen."

Limits to Freedom

The tensions inherent in the country's struggle to deliver on its promise of equality emerged several times in this study, and some findings suggest that one's stance on our progress in this area sometimes rests in the eye of the beholder. Majorities of African Americans and Hispanic Americans, for example, believe that minorities are more restricted when it comes to exercising their rights. Approximately 6 in 10 African Americans (61%) and Hispanics (58%) agree with the statement, "In many ways, members of minority groups face more limits on their freedoms than white people do," compared to 41% of white Americans.

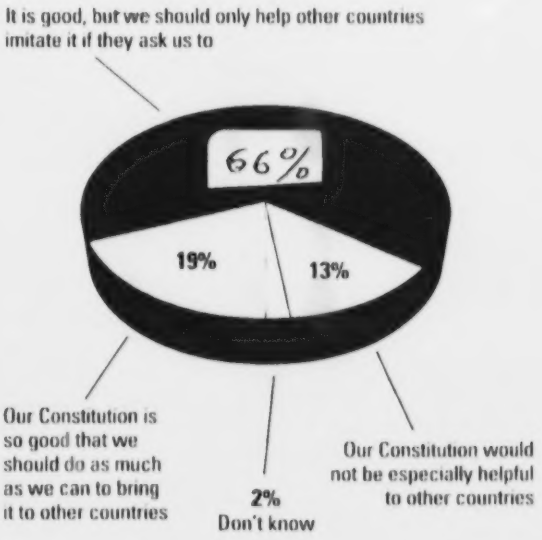
But others see things in a different light. Perhaps reflecting the disputes that regularly arise over affirmative action, half (50%) of white Americans agree with the statement, "In many ways, members of minority groups have more protections and rights than white people do." Comparatively, only 18% of African Americans and 29% of Hispanics agree with the statement. Still, despite these tensions and perhaps some feelings of resentment, many people acknowledge the need for the country to improve in this area.[3] As one white person in Connecticut commented, "One of the best things about America is that we've been trying to inch toward what we said in the beginning we were supposed to be about. We're not there yet."

"Warts and All"

Put together, these findings show a deep-seated love of country coupled with a realistic view of America's weaknesses and mistakes. And that's what Americans would like schoolchildren to learn about their nation: 9 in 10 (90%) think that "it's better to teach the bad and the good, warts and all" when teaching American history to middle and high school students; just 9% think the schools should always paint the country "in the best possible light." Many of the adults we spoke to seemed to have faith that providing young people with the facts would pay off in the long run. "I think they'll come back and say wow, we've come a long, long way," said a Texas woman. "Kids today can handle a lot more than we could as kids," said a man from Nashville. "They're more sophisticated. The media alone—they're exposed at early ages. If we lie to them…we're going to lose credibility. The whole system is going to collapse."

Well, If They Ask…

Which comes closest to your view about the Constitution?


It is good, but we should only help other countries imitate it if they ask us to
66%
19%
13%
Our Constitution is so good that we should do as much as we can to bring it to other countries
2%
Don't know
Our Constitution would not be especially helpful to other countries

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The American Way or No Way?

This measured pride is evident not only on domestic matters, but on a global level as well. While Americans are proud of their country and their Constitution, they express some humility when thinking about other nations. America is often accused of forcing its culture and values on other countries and people regardless of their own traditions or desires. Despite these criticisms, however, the American public is not so quick to say that ours should be the model. Only 19% believe "our Constitution is so good that we should do as much as we can to bring it to other countries." The large majority (66%) says we should help other countries imitate our Constitution—but only if they ask.

"One of the best things about America is that we've been trying to inch toward what we said in the beginning we were supposed to be about. We're not there yet."

— Connecticut man

FINDING TWO: IT GOES WITHOUT SAYING

Most Americans understand more about the Constitution than many give them credit for. While they have a hazy recall of the specifics, the vast majority have absorbed the basic principles of the Constitution and convey broad acceptance of them. Most say that rights come with limits and responsibilities, and they voice a respect and understanding for the legal process. While majorities admit not knowing the basics of the Constitution, most Americans say it is "absolutely essential" for Americans to have a thorough knowledge of it.

Several previous research studies on the Constitution have made two things clear: Most Americans prize their Constitution and most often don't even know the basic facts about it. For example, in 2001 Gallup asked, "What are the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution called?" Forty-three percent either did not know or answered incorrectly (57% correctly replied the Bill of Rights).[4] In a 1997 nationwide survey conducted for the National Constitution Center, only 48% of the public knew there are 100 Senators in the U.S. Congress.[5]

"Just Brief Me a Little"

People who participated in focus groups for *Knowing It by Heart* also displayed a less-than-thorough comfort level with the facts of the Constitution. "Just brief me a little on some of the words," was one Philadelphia woman's charming plea. "It's been a long, long time since I've been out of school—almost 40 years. Just brief me a little and then I'll remember."

But what became abundantly clear in focus group after focus group is that Americans, as if by second nature, are actually quite comfortable with the values and principles embodied in the Constitution. Beneath a surface ignorance of what each Amendment says typically lies an internalized understanding of the rights and principles it guarantees. By significant majorities, Americans believe that constitutional rights come with responsibilities and that how these rights are interpreted evolves with time. Most Americans also say that the nation's governing principles are responsible for the stability our society enjoys. Though they may have forgotten—or never properly learned—the document, they've come to understand its meaning by heart.

As we will see in this and later findings, Americans are often remarkably uninformed about important constitutional issues that absorb the attention of experts and the judiciary. Frequently, they are short on specifics and impressionistic in their grasp of key precepts. Yet when they are presented with concrete dilemmas that pose difficult constitutional choices, most readily understand the contending rights. Even more important, most demonstrate a capacity to put their personal views aside in order to respect the rights of others.

> ***"It doesn't matter whether you can recite it or not. If you don't live it then reciting it doesn't do you any good."***
>
> *—Texas man*

Freedom Requires Responsibility

The capacity for nuance in the public's view indicates that Americans may understand more than pundits give them credit for. Nearly 3 in 4 (73%) say that the rights and freedoms guaranteed by the Bill of Rights should come with limits and responsibilities; just 24% believe they ought to be complete and absolute. In describing what America stands for, focus group participants often proffered the word "freedom" but would quickly add a caveat. "With this idea of freedom comes responsibility," said a Connecticut woman. "Freedom of speech to demonstrate in the street—you do have it. But do you have a right to disrupt the business of a McDonald's on that street? Or you start yelling in there, you disturb a paying guest, that paying guest has a right to say 'Excuse me, I paid for a quiet place to sit.'... If you're going to have freedom, you've got to have

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responsibility." A Texas man tried to summarize: "One person's rights end where another person's begin. You have rights and you have to respect the other person's rights." The law comes alive around conflict between competing rights, and there is no doubt this is a topic the public appreciates.

Withstanding the Test of Time

The admiration that focus group participants expressed for the Constitution did not feel like the kind paid to distant monuments or relics of the past. There was a fundamental sense that the Constitution is relevant today, and still a guiding resource. For example, most Americans (62%) say the rights and freedoms embodied in the Bill of Rights were "meant to change with the times," compared to just over a third (35%) who say that "these rights and freedoms were meant to never change." "It's still a living document, you still need to work on it all the time," said a woman in Nashville. "It encompasses what we should be after…We're people—laws and rules may be good for a time but times change, sometimes things need to get massaged." And when discussions turned to amending the Constitution, many recognized the tension between allowing too little or too much change.*

No Guns, No Riots

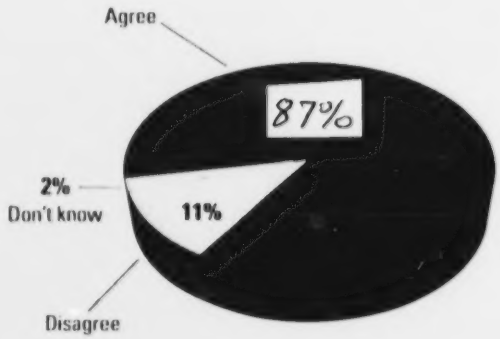
Not surprisingly, other bedrock principles found in the Constitution—majority will-minority rights and the rule of law—are also deeply ingrained in the American mind. A full 87% agree with the statement: "Decisions in the United States should follow the will of the majority, but the rights of the minority should always be protected" (65% strongly agree).

Turning to the law, 81% agree that "One of this country's greatest strengths is its reliable legal process—disagreements are settled in the court rather than in the street." Here, people often compared the American experience with other countries. One participant used the 2000 presidential election as an example: "The majority voted for the other guy. There was a little conflict. The Supreme Court decided who was going to be president. Then came January and there was a swearing-in, an inauguration. There were no guns in the street, no riots. Where did that come from? Would that happen in other countries?"

It is safe to say that most people do not spend their days thinking about the blessings of the rule of law. But we found that given a little time and opportunity to talk about what makes this country successful, someone in a focus group would bring up the sense that a trustworthy legal system prevents disagreements from blowing up into conflict. "When you have an effective government and an effective legal system, it makes it difficult for individuals to take their actions to extreme," said a Texas man. "If you're not prosecuted by the local or the state or federal government, you will be sued by your neighbor or friends. There are systems in place that would halt any type of action that causes others to be uncomfortable."

Protecting the Rights of the Minority

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Decisions in the United States should follow the will of the majority, but the rights of the minority should always be protected.



* *This survey did not explore contending positions on debates about constitutional interpretation among scholars and experts, and the public's responses should not be interpreted in that light. Rather, our purpose was to probe more rudimentary and basic questions about the degree to which the public considers the Constitution and its guarantees of continued relevance in today's America.*

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Letter of the Law

The classic *Dirty Harry* and *Death Wish* movies with their vigilante heroes evoked the public's frustration with high crime rates and the criminal justice system during the 1970s and 1980s. Those were decades characterized by a pervasive sense that the mechanics of the justice system were out of kilter with the standards of common sense—how else could you explain when accused criminals were released because of "trivial" technicalities? In questioning focus group participants about whether or not something is wrong with the system if criminals get off scot-free because of legal technicalities, one Dayton man said, "If officers know what they were supposed to and they went in there and blew the case because they didn't do the proper thing, that's improper justice. They should be penalized for not doing it right and the penalty for not doing it right is they lose the conviction."

People's survey responses also showed a surprising depth of commitment to the process—not only the outcomes—of justice. While almost 3 in 10 (29%) say that the most important goal of the criminal justice system should be to put guilty people in jail, half (50%) say "it's just as important to protect the rights of the accused as it is to put guilty people in jail" and 18% say "even if this means some guilty people are let go, it's important to protect the rights of the accused."

"I personally am glad that there are appeals," said a Nashville man. "I would rather see a guilty person go free than somebody innocent be put to death for something he didn't do. The responsibility of the prosecution is to get a conviction with the evidence. If they only get a conviction because of inept lawyers, then it deserves another look."

Turtle vs. Hare

Though many historians and political scientists would probably agree that our system was designed to be deliberate and slow moving, this is one principle that Americans are not sure about. Only 31% of Americans say the writers of the Constitution intended our government to be slow moving, 25% say fast moving, and 39% admit they do not know enough about it to say.

Protecting the Rights of the Accused

Which comes closest to your view about the criminal justice system?

% of respondents who say:	
Putting guilty people in jail should be the most important goal of the criminal justice system	29%
— OR —	
It's just as important to protect the rights of the accused as it is to put guilty people in jail	50%
— OR —	
Even if this means some guilty people are let go, it's important to protect the rights of the accused	18%

It's clear that Americans appreciate principles such as the rights of the accused and the rule of law. What's more, they believe that rights conjoin responsibilities and that the application or interpretation of rights may need to evolve. These findings point to a relatively sophisticated sensibility about the Constitution, and yet it is undeniable that sizable proportions of the public know little about the basics of their government. Does this matter? The answer is it depends. In *Knowing It by Heart*, only 16% claim to have a detailed knowledge of the Constitution and the rights and freedoms it spells out; two thirds (66%) say they are generally familiar with it; and 17% confess they feel hazy and vague about it.

Yet when asked about it, 67% say "it's absolutely essential for ordinary Americans to have a detailed knowledge of their constitutional rights and freedoms," whereas another third (33%) say it is important, but not essential. Similarly, very few people (16%) say "it wouldn't matter much" if very few Americans know the ins-and-outs of the Constitution. But nearly 4 in 10 (38%) say "it would be dangerous for the country," and another 42% would see it as "sad but not dangerous."

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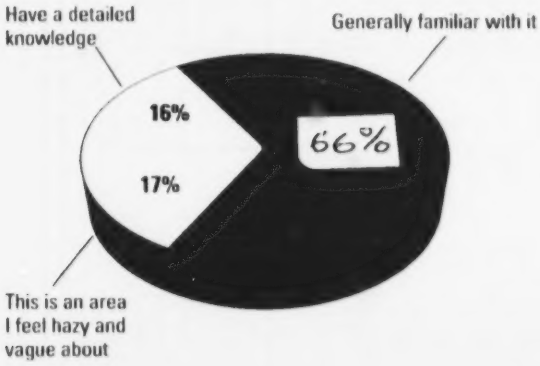
Few Claim Detailed Knowledge

How much would you say YOU know about the Constitution and the rights and freedoms it spells out?



Why Does It Matter?

The reasons many are unwilling to resign themselves to a lack of knowledge combine practicality (know your rights so they are not trampled), sentiment—especially post-September 11—and a concern about the future.

Asked for the best reason they should personally know the Constitution, 44% say because it makes them a better citizen or voter, 28% that it makes it harder for the police and the government to abuse their rights and 26% that it indicates an appreciation and respect for their history. "I don't want to see my child grow up not knowing and not remembering that slavery happened here. I don't want to hear children saying 'What do you mean, the right to bear arms? What is that?'" said a Texas woman. The events of September 11 added even greater urgency to this conclusion: 9 in 10 (90%) agree that "after the terrorist attacks on America, it's more important than ever to know what our Constitution stands for," with 76% strongly agreeing.

You Have to Live It

What would the Founding Fathers want their inheritors to know about their Constitution? It's easy to speculate that they would surely be pleased if Americans—young and old, immigrant and native born—knew the actual words they struggled so mightily to pen. A little bit of reverence and respect would probably make them proud. But, pragmatic idealists that they were, they would be most interested in seeing if Americans actually uphold—by word and deed—the principles for which they risked everything. So the simple words of one Texas man might give them comfort: "It doesn't matter whether you can recite it or not. If you don't live it then reciting it doesn't do you any good."

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FINDING THREE: THE BALANCING ACT

Despite admitting their limited knowledge of the Constitution, Americans display a meaningful ability to think carefully about scenarios and situations that bring an individual's rights and freedoms to the forefront. Most are able to set aside their own views on controversial issues such as abortion or the homeless in order to think about them in terms of the rights of others. The majority of Americans believe our society has struck the right balance on many issues.

Perhaps there is no greater test of *living* the Constitution than when the general principles that Americans hold dear are embodied as unpopular, controversial cases and put to the test. Can Americans talk about their rights with a consistent realism, logic and clarity?

The focus groups were an ideal place to bring up scenarios laden with conflict and test people's commitment to rights. In focus groups around the country, Public Agenda asked participants questions such as: How far can people go when they protest? To what extent can the government control the access of the press during war? If the police fail to follow proper procedure, should important evidence be excluded from a trial? Watching how Americans wrestle with such situations was revealing.

Rules of the Game

What emerged from the focus group discussions was a singular sense that Americans have internalized the Constitution's "rules of the game." They can grapple with the implications of the principles and apply them to specific cases. So while many can name only a few of the rights promised by the Bill of Rights, indicating a general lack of knowledge, participants were more than able to engage in the sort of give-and-take considerations and what-if arguments implied by various scenarios. They rarely used the language of constitutional scholars or legal experts; but as the moderators added complications and changed the circumstances of the scenarios, people reconsidered their views accordingly and explained them in ways that made sense.

For the telephone survey, Public Agenda designed a special series of survey questions probing two subjects in-depth—the rights of abortion protesters and the rights of the homeless—to see whether and how Americans' perceptions of rights shift when the circumstances change.*

Don't Tread on Me

Few issues are as capable of consuming the agenda of the nation—and the passions of individuals—as abortion. The nation's courts have had to repeatedly struggle with how to balance the right to protest what some see as an unconscionable wrong versus the right to access what is, after all, a legal medical procedure. How does the public fare when asked to do the same?

It is the public's capacity to wrestle with these situations and to meaningfully adjust their views that forms the cornerstone of their thinking about the Constitution.

The first scenario asked about a group of protesters who want to hold "a peaceful demonstration across the street from a family planning clinic where abortions take place. Do you think this is within their rights, is it going beyond their rights or is this too tough to call?" Fully 73% say the protesters would be acting within their rights. Few (13%) say this would be going beyond their rights and few (13%) say it is too tough to call.

** The National Constitution Center and Public Agenda take no position on any of the issues presented in these scenarios or the ones concerning anti-terror policies discussed in the next chapter. These questions were posed only to explore the public's ability to understand and grapple with the constitutional issues involved.*

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But the public becomes far less accepting of the right to protest when crucial changes in the details of the scenario portray the protesters as possibly imposing on other people's rights. When the second scenario describes protesters as wanting to "stand right next to the entrance to the clinic and shout their beliefs about abortion," the results completely reverse. Now 70% say the protesters are going beyond their rights. To many, the protesters now seem to be limiting other people's rights through intimidation.

"They can protest. But they can't go so close to the building, can't impede traffic, harass people. You can't touch people. There are rules they have to follow," said a Dayton man.

The public's recurring concern is that people exercise their own individual rights while respecting other people's rights.

When the third question describes an even more complicated scenario—the protesters now wish to take pictures of the people going into the clinic and put them on the Internet with their names and addresses—fully 89% say they are going beyond their rights. For some, this step posed an explicit threat of violence, and it was taken even further by one woman who said, "There's the extremist who wants to blow up the building…You've got life in there also. That person has the freedom to protest but to a degree."

The final question of the series presents a softer scenario—but one that still has real costs at stake: "The store owners next to this clinic complain that the protesters are disrupting their business because customers are avoiding the area. The store owners want the courts to limit the protest to certain hours of the day." Here 64% say the courts should decide in favor of the store owners, whereas 27% say this is too tough to call. In this scenario, violence was not a danger, but many did see a threat to people's right to earn a living and the question still allowed the protest to take place during certain hours. A woman in Philadelphia said, "They should be able to protest in a peaceful manner and not hinder that particular business. You're free to have your opinion, but you cannot force your opinion on someone else. Like you can't force your religion on someone else. They should be able to protest in a peaceful manner."

Supporters, Opponents and the Right of Protest

It's an obvious point that many people have strong feelings about abortion rights. Our own sample is divided into three segments: 43% who say "abortion should be generally available to those who want it" (the group we refer to as "supporters") 34% who say it "should be available but under stricter limits than it is now" and 21% who say it "should not be permitted" (the group we refer to as "opponents"). One might argue that a more realistic test of tolerance for free speech is to see whether respondents would give someone they absolutely disagree with the opportunity to speak out. Are the supporters of abortion rights quick to deny opponents the opportunity to protest the issue? Do opponents give protesters carte blanche to have their say, regardless of the circumstances?

Large majorities of both supporters and opponents of abortion rights accept the protesters' right to demonstrate—71% and 78%, respectively. And even larger majorities of both groups—even opponents—say the protesters would be going beyond their rights if they take pictures of the people going into the clinic and post their names and addresses on the Internet (92% and 84%, respectively). The virtually explicit threat and concern over compromising people's privacy led both groups to believe this iteration of free speech crosses the line. "It's going beyond their rights because they're taking away someone else's rights when they take pictures," said a California woman. "And they absolutely don't have the right to do that." Another man described it this way: "What happened to this woman's rights? It doesn't matter what your views are about abortion. Defending the right to a person's privacy is something we should and need to defend."

Putting Aside Personal Views

Majorities of both supporters and opponents also say the protesters go beyond their rights if they stand immediately next to the clinic and shout their abortion beliefs—although opponents of abortion rights show a substantially slimmer majority (78% vs. 55%, respectively). Finally, there is a large difference in the responses to the last scenario—store owners complaining about protesters disrupting their business.

Here, 70% of those who support abortion rights would restrict the demonstration to certain hours of the day, but only 47% of those who oppose abortion rights would make similar restrictions. Fairly large numbers in both groups, however, end up saying the issue is just too tough to call (23% and 35%, respectively).

The data are consistent. When, in exercising their right to protest, protesters seem to threaten the rights of others—either to safety or to privacy or to earn a living—Americans want to mitigate that threat—regardless of their ideological stand on the abortion issue.

Abortion and the Right to Protest

Scenario 1

Suppose that a group of anti-abortion protesters wants to hold a peaceful demonstration across the street from a family planning clinic where abortions take place. Do you think this is:

	Abortion Rights Supporters*	Abortion Rights Opponents*
Within their rights	71%	78%
Beyond their rights	16%	9%
It's too tough to call	13%	12%

Scenario 2

Now suppose that the anti-abortion protesters want to stand right next to the entrance to the clinic and shout their beliefs about abortion. Do you think this is:

	Abortion Rights Supporters	Abortion Rights Opponents
Within their rights	12%	27%
Beyond their rights	78%	55%
It's too tough to call	10%	17%

Scenario 3

Suppose that the anti-abortion protesters take pictures of the people going into the clinic, and put them on the Internet with their names and addresses. Do you think this is:

	Abortion Rights Supporters	Abortion Rights Opponents
Within their rights	4%	6%
Beyond their rights	92%	84%
It's too tough to call	4%	10%

Scenario 4

Now suppose that the store owners next to this clinic complain that the protesters are disrupting their business because customers are avoiding the area. The store owners want the courts to limit the protest to certain hours of the day. Do you think the courts should decide:

	Abortion Rights Supporters	Abortion Rights Opponents
In favor of the store owners	70%	47%
In favor of the protesters	6%	16%
It's too tough to call	23%	35%

* In the survey, respondents were asked, "Which of these statements comes closest to your view?" 43% answered "Abortion should be generally available to those who want it" (Abortion Rights Supporters) and 21% said "Abortion should not be permitted" (Abortion Rights Opponents). Another 34% said "Abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now."

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Free to Be, but Don't Bother Me

In 1987, New York City Mayor Ed Koch announced that homeless individuals who were deemed dangerous to themselves or others would be hospitalized even against their will.[8] Needless to say, his words triggered lasting public debate—and even litigation. Fifteen years later, the nation is still trying to reconcile the rights of homeless individuals, the interests of the community and the responsibilities of government. People in the focus groups and in the survey also wrestled with these competing values and rights.

Almost 3 in 4 (74%) say "a homeless man who has been living on the streets for a few years" has a right to "be left alone and live the way he chooses"—when he's described as never having bothered anyone. As a woman from Tennessee said, "The government is sometimes too much of a big brother. If he doesn't infringe on anyone else's rights, then leave him be." But when the scenario becomes more threatening to passers-by—"his behavior seems disturbed and that he sometimes verbally threatens other people"—most people (54%) say the police should take him off the street, even if he has never attacked or hurt anyone. Still, 1 in 5 (20%) believe it is his right to be left alone, and an additional 26% say this is too tough to call.

A third question paints this scenario: "Several homeless people are constantly hanging out in a local shopping area. The store owners complain that the homeless people are driving away customers and want the police to move them away." Here, the vast majority (71%) says the police should move them out of the area. Few (8%) believe they should be left alone. This question pits the "right" to earn a living against the "right" to be left alone; it also gives the public the option of having the police "move" the problem rather than the tougher option of taking them off the street. For many in the focus groups, like this woman from California, it is simply a practical matter: "In a shopping area the owners are paying rent and they need customers to keep their business going. So it's their right to have the police move them away."

When people were asked what should be done about "a large number of homeless people who are eating and sleeping in a park where families and children used to visit but now avoid," the results were less decisive. Half (51%) say the police should move the homeless out of the park, but 17% think they should be left alone to live the way they choose and 31% say this scenario is too tough to call.

Are people's attitudes merely driven by how much sympathy they have for the homeless or are they actually weighing the tensions between individual rights, community concerns and government responsibility? *Knowing It by Heart* suggests that people appear to be adjusting their views according to the circumstances of the situation, not according to how much sympathy they feel toward the homeless. Our sample is divided into three self-identified groups: those who "have a lot of sympathy and compassion" for the homeless (48%); those who have "some" sympathy and compassion (37%); and those who have "a little" sympathy or "none" at all (14%).

"They should be able to protest in a peaceful manner and not hinder that particular business. You're free to have your opinion, but you cannot force your opinion on someone else."

—Philadelphia woman

Does Sympathy Equate to Rights?

Majorities of the group most sympathetic to the homeless, as well as the group least sympathetic, agree that a man living on the streets and not bothering anyone should be left alone (76% and 71%, respectively). But when the homeless man is described as displaying disturbed and threatening behavior, majorities of both groups think that the police should take him off the streets (53% and 60%, respectively). Larger majorities of both also concur when the scenario asks if the police should force a group of homeless individuals to move when store owners complain about losing business (68% and 81%, respectively).

Only in the park scenario—where the homeless have taken over a park that families used to visit—do substantive differences emerge: 66% of the group least sympathetic to the homeless say the police should move them out of the park, but only 45% of the sympathetic

segment agree. Yet even here, it's not so much that the sympathetic group wants the homeless left alone—only 20% take this position; 34% opt for the "too tough to call" option.

To most Americans, it comes down to whether the right of the homeless man to be left alone is threatening people's right to be safe or to make a living. If it is, he loses his right. Sympathy or sensitivity to a homeless person's position is not enough to counterbalance this belief.

The Homeless and the Police

Scenario 1
Imagine a homeless man who has been living on the streets for a few years. He refuses to go to a shelter or to accept help, but he has never bothered anyone. Do you think that:

	Most Sympathetic Respondents*	Least Sympathetic Respondents*
It's his right to be left alone	76%	71%
The police should take him off the streets	8%	14%
It's too tough to call	16%	16%

Scenario 2
Now suppose that his behavior seems disturbed and that he sometimes verbally threatens other people. Still, he has never attacked or hurt anyone. Do you think that:

	Most Sympathetic Respondents	Least Sympathetic Respondents
It's his right to be left alone	21%	20%
The police should take him off the streets	53%	60%
It's too tough to call	26%	20%

Scenario 3
Now suppose that several homeless people are constantly hanging out in a local shopping area. The store owners complain that the homeless people are driving away customers and want the police to move them away. Do you think that:

	Most Sympathetic Respondents	Least Sympathetic Respondents
They should be left alone to live the way they choose	10%	5%
The police should move them out of the area	68%	81%
It's too tough to call	22%	13%

Scenario 4
Now suppose that a large number of homeless people are eating and sleeping in a park where families and children used to visit but now avoid. Do you think that:

	Most Sympathetic Respondents	Least Sympathetic Respondents
They should be left alone to live the way they choose	20%	13%
The police should move them out of the park	45%	66%
It's too tough to call	34%	20%

* In the survey, respondents were asked, "How much sympathy and compassion do you have for homeless people?" 48% said "A lot of sympathy and compassion" (Most Sympathetic Respondents) and 14% said "A little" or "None" (Least Sympathetic Respondents). Another 37% said "Some."

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Colliding Rights

For the purposes of this study, how the courts actually rule in such cases—and whether the public agrees—is a secondary question. What counts for more is the general principle suggested by the research: people are willing to look past their own views on abortion, for example, and to weigh the circumstances under which the right to protest abortion can be realized.

Some may argue that the public's commitment to freedom and liberty ends up weak and spineless, that people are too quick to limit the right of protest as soon as it threatens to collide with the interests of business, for example. But the real explanation is more complimentary to the public—and perhaps far easier to believe because it's what people actually say, over and over. The public's recurring concern is that people exercise their own individual rights while respecting other people's rights. The compromises and accommodations they are willing to make are driven by that concern. This may not be to the liking of some—and the accommodations may or may not be supported by constitutional jurisprudence. But arguably, it is the public's capacity to wrestle with these situations and to meaningfully adjust their views that forms the cornerstone of their thinking about the Constitution.

In Balance

Those who have dedicated their lives to defending constitutional rights are often on high alert for violations of those rights, vigilant of a "slippery slope" whose end, they fear, is the loss of liberty. Others object that our society is going overboard the other way—that a widespread sense of entitlement is leading people to unthinkingly expect the fulfillment of their rights without regard to costs or limits.

At first blush, the public itself also appears to be divided. While 1 in 3 (33%) believe "there are too many limits on people's rights" these days, another 20% believe there are not enough limits and 43% say things are okay the way they are. The public is also split on when it comes to the importance of disputes such as "whether public schools can display the Ten Commandments or whether the government can listen in on prisoners talking to their lawyers." Just over half (52%) say these types of things are important and reflect serious disagreements, compared to 42% who say that these kinds of things are overblown.

A closer look, however, reveals that most Americans feel society is doing okay. For example, when it comes to the right to freely express one's views, nearly 7 in 10 (68%) believe we're striking the right balance. There are similar findings on the right to vote (81%), the right to live life as we choose to live it (67%), the right to protest or criticize the government (66%) and freedom of religion (61%). Even when it comes to the right to due process and legal protections—an area with lots of controversy over the system's protection of the rights of the accused—more than half (52%) say things are okay the way they are.

Guns and the Press

In only two out of the eight areas queried are there hints of controversy, where a majority of the public feels things are not in balance: the right to bear arms and freedom of the press. The public divides into three blocks when they are asked if people have the right to own firearms, with nearly one third (32%) feeling we have gone too far in expanding the right, 26% saying we have restricted it too much and 40% saying things are okay as they are today.

People appear to be adjusting their views according to the circumstances of the situation, not according to how much sympathy they feel toward the homeless.

The question of freedom of the press is different. Americans who believe there's been an over-expansion of this freedom far outweigh those who worry the press has been too restricted—43% say we have gone too far in expanding this right, compared to 8% who say it has been restricted too much (48% say things are okay as they are). At the root of this finding may be the familiar criticisms the public has of the press: insensitivity when interviewing victims in the midst of suffering or tragedy; carelessness in providing detailed military actions that people fear might aid the enemy; focus on gore or tawdry behaviors to drive up

circulation or ratings. A woman from Tennessee said this about the media: "They're irresponsible. It's not that I don't think they should be able to print the truth, but newspapers are looking for sales rather than content. I realize it's a business, but it's sensationalism that they're selling to Americans."

Striking the Right Balance

Do you think we have gone too far in expanding the following rights, restricted them too much, or are things OK the way they are?

% of respondents who say:	Gone too far in expanding	Restricted it too much	Things OK the way they are
The right to vote	7%	10%	81%
The right to freely express your views	13%	17%	68%
The right to live your life the way you choose	13%	18%	67%
The right to protest or criticize the government	13%	19%	66%
Freedom of religion	13%	24%	61%
Due process and legal protections for people accused of crime	28%	16%	52%
Freedom of the press	43%	8%	48%
The right to own firearms	32%	26%	40%

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FINDING FOUR: PROTECTING OUR RIGHTS IN PERILOUS TIMES

After September 11, Americans want the government to take strong measures to prevent more attacks, but the vast majority also seems to recoil at cavalier infringement of people's rights. Most are uncomfortable with blatant forms of profiling, and many voice some concern that government actions could threaten privacy. Still, the public appears ready to live with increased surveillance in some circumstances, and they are loath to provide much protection to anyone in the country illegally.

A year after September 11, Americans are still trying to absorb the meaning of the event. Even now, they offer differing views on why we were attacked and the degree to which our tradition of civil liberties contributed to our vulnerability. Consigned to living with fears that were only dimly imaginable a year ago, the public is just beginning to wrestle with how to respond to the new status quo.

Surveys have consistently shown broad support for the war on terror abroad. Very few Americans have questioned either the human or financial cost of the war.[7] Even though Al Qaeda remains a potent threat, President Bush and the military both draw high ratings for their conduct of the war.[8] On the domestic front, however, the public opinion picture has been somewhat cloudier. The government was lauded for its actions in Afghanistan, but the public voiced less confidence in the way it handled the anthrax attacks here at home.[9]

Residual Doubts and Regrets

In perhaps one of the most difficult and controversial arenas—how to balance constitutional concerns with heightened security needs—opinion polls have offered conflicting signals. In the attacks' wake, majorities of Americans told survey takers that they wanted a dramatic expansion of government power to increase security—for example, more surveillance and the profiling of Muslims and others of Middle Eastern appearance. Given Americans' virtually universal sense of shock and grief, the country perhaps naturally rallied around its leaders and reached out for ways to protect itself. For Americans, this was a time for all to come together, not the time to begin debate. Yet even then, surveys picked up at least some residual doubts and regrets about some of these steps.

Right after the attacks, for example, almost 6 in 10 Americans said that Arabs should undergo "more intensive security checks" before boarding planes, and almost half favored requiring Arab-Americans to carry a special ID, according to a *Gallup/CNN/USA Today* poll taken September 14 and 15, 2001.[10] Yet shortly thereafter, when Princeton Survey Research Associates posed a similar question for *Newsweek*, briefly mentioning how Japanese-Americans were treated after Pearl Harbor, they got very different results: 68% said it would be "a mistake to target a nationality group."[11]

To some, a question that refers to the treatment of Japanese-Americans in World War II might seem to be leading, but it revealed an important fact about public opinion at the time. For the most part, Americans had done very little thinking about the constitutional issues involved in fighting terrorism; and even during those emotionally charged weeks, their views were easily and quickly changeable. In *Knowing It by Heart*, we revisit three constitutional dilemmas posed by the terrorism threat: profiling of specific groups, government surveillance and privacy and due process for illegal immigrants. Just what do Americans have to say about these issues now that they have had time to reflect on what the country may need to do to protect itself?

Consigned to living with fears that were only dimly imaginable a year ago, the public is just beginning to wrestle with how to respond to the new status quo.

Did They Attack Because We're Free?

As a backdrop to exploring the constitutional issues, we asked Americans whether they think the terrorist attacks were at least in part motivated by the country's tradition of rights and freedoms. Overall, Americans are hardly of one mind about the motives of perpetrators. Although almost 4 in 10 (38%) think that some foreign groups and governments hate the United States because they feel threatened by our freedoms and ideals, most are drawn to other explanations: 27% say these groups are jealous of our economic success and nearly 3 in 10 (29%) say that "they see us as a bully who throws our weight around."

The vast majority of Americans also tend to dismiss the argument that our concern for constitutional issues and civil rights undermined the government's ability to prevent the attacks on September 11. Just 1 in 10 Americans (10%) say "concern for civil liberties prevented law enforcement agencies from doing their job well," whereas 42% say law enforcement "did a bad job of analyzing the information they already had." Forty-two percent of Americans think that "the attacks were so unbelievable and unexpected that no one could have predicted them."

Americans are unified in believing that the events of September 11 highlight the importance of the country's democratic traditions. Nine in 10 (90%) agree that it's more important than ever to know what the Constitution stands for after the terrorist attacks. Even so, there is little in this study to suggest that most Americans have spent much time wrestling with the constitutional implications of the fight against terror. Although we found respondents to be thoughtful and interested, few seemed to have fixed or consistent views on how to balance the provisions of the Constitution with the need to ferret out those who may be plotting more terror.

Understandable but Unfortunate

We noted earlier that surveys taken after September 11 found a great deal of support for focusing on Muslims and others from the Middle East as potential terrorists or collaborators. A Public Agenda survey conducted in early 2002 confirmed the public's general backing for this approach. About 1 in 10 (11%) Americans said they see "nothing particularly wrong" with officials looking at people with a Middle Eastern appearance with more scrutiny; another two-thirds (67%) said that this is understandable, although they wish it didn't have to happen.[12]

Americans have a fairly spontaneous aversion to overtly sorting people on racial, ethnic or religious grounds.

In the current study, we probed these attitudes further, offering more concrete examples of profiling as a way to test public acceptance and learn whether there are limits to it. In this survey, we presented two different scenarios. In one, we asked how officials should determine which passengers to search before an airline flight. Here, the majority of Americans go for the policy many are already familiar with: 58% say officials should randomly pick passengers to be searched. A quarter (25%) would go with a more limited approach — picking only those passengers who are on a list of suspects. Yet, despite broad public support for profiling suggested by other surveys (including our own), just 11% say they would want officials to pick only those passengers with Arabic names or Middle Eastern appearance.

Little Support for Profiling

In the second example, focusing just on Muslims or others from the Middle East proved even less popular. Asked how officials should screen people who want to take flying lessons, more than 9 in 10 Americans (92%) say officials should screen everyone, regardless of their backgrounds or names; just 6% say "screen only people who are from the Middle East or who have Arabic names."

It is not clear, of course, the degree to which the public's rejection of the profiling option in these cases stems mainly from distaste for the tactic or from fear that people from other ethnic backgrounds might turn out to be just as dangerous. After all, Richard Reid, traveling on a British passport, and an American-born Hispanic Jose Padilla have already been tabbed by officials as Al Qaeda operatives. Nor do these results mean that Americans necessarily reject less obvious forms of profiling or that people would rise up in

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protest whenever profiling does occur. Still, these results suggest that most Americans have a fairly spontaneous aversion to overtly sorting people on racial, ethnic or religious grounds.

Okay to Listen In?

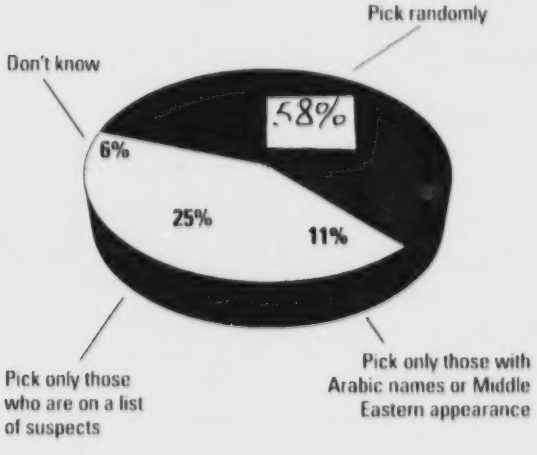
As we will report in Finding 5, the majority of Americans indicate that they worry about increasing invasions of their privacy. Yet most have told survey takers that they are ready to relinquish their privacy at least to some extent in order to fight terrorism. Earlier this year, 79% told researchers from ABC News/*Washington Post* that it was more important for the FBI to investigate terrorist threats "even if that intrudes on personal privacy" than for the FBI to limit its activity out of concern for people's privacy.[11]

In *Knowing It by Heart*, we again tested people's reactions by providing concrete examples, and our results confirm some of what other researchers have shown: Most Americans are willing to accept surveillance itself as an acceptable technique—particularly if the parties being monitored have an explicit tie to terrorism or have expressed some sympathy for its goals. We asked respondents their opinion on allowing the FBI "to secretly monitor conversations between prisoners or suspected terrorists and their lawyers, even though such conversations used to be protected as confidential." Even with this reminder about lawyer-client confidentiality, 59% of Americans think this is "a sensible way to get information about possible terrorist plots," 35% worry that this violates the right to private legal advice.

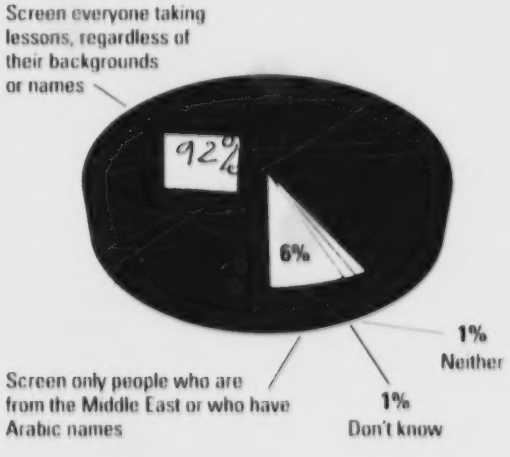
We also asked what the FBI should do if agents were observing an Internet chat room and came across a discussion among people who appeared to be planning a terrorist attack. Here again, most people seem to accept surveillance itself as a reasonable course of action. Just 4% of Americans question the FBI's right to observe such chat rooms in the first place. Even given this somewhat alarming scenario, much of the public chooses a fairly measured response. Half (50%) say the agent should get court permission and investigate further. A quarter (25%) suggest keeping a close eye on the conversation before doing anything. Just 1 in 5 (20%) say the agent should arrest the participants immediately.

Few Comfortable with Blatant Profiling

If airport officials decided to search passengers before they got on planes, how would you want them to pick passengers who should be searched? Would you want them to:



Suppose that to prevent future terrorist attacks using planes, law enforcement officials wanted to screen and check the backgrounds of people taking flying lessons. Would you want them to:



Snooping on People's Private Lives

Although our results confirm that most Americans accept some government surveillance of those with suspected terrorist ties, *Knowing It by Heart* also indicates that many may be less keen on using these tactics more widely. When we asked whether there is any danger that the effort to fight terrorism might give law enforcement too much leeway to "snoop on people's private lives," more than half of Americans admit to some level of concern: 33% say the government is "threatening to cross the line" and 21% say it has already done so. Forty-two percent of Americans say this is not a serious threat to privacy.

Given the passage of time since September 11, and with nearly a year to "return to normal," it is hardly surprising that some Americans are more disposed to question the need for surveillance than they were right after the attacks. Right now, relatively few Americans voice any outright concerns about current policy. Still, roughly half of the public appears to have misgivings at some level that surveillance tactics could get out of hand.

Drawing the Line on Unlawful Immigration

Another outcome of the events of September 11 is increased scrutiny on immigrants and immigration policy. To many civil libertarians, the willingness to extend the rights guaranteed in our own Constitution to anyone on our shores—citizen or not—is the mark of a civilized nation. If we believe that we deserve these protections, they ask, then why don't others—as equally human as we are—deserve them as well? Yet, many Americans simply do not see the issue that way. To most, there is a clear-cut line between the protections they would give to citizens and those they would offer to illegal immigrants.[14]

In part, the widespread unwillingness to extend basic constitutional guarantees to illegal immigrants may reflect a pent-up frustration at what many see as an immigration free-for-all. Polls have repeatedly shown broad concern about illegal immigration. Even prior to September 11, 90% of Americans said that the problem was at least "somewhat serious," just 8% said it was not serious at all.[15] Surveys also suggest that many Americans believe management of the problem has veered out of control. Fifty-three percent say they believe most immigrants are here illegally, and 77% say the government is not doing enough to control the border.[16]

Whatever their rationale, most Americans seem ready to draw a line in the sand after the terrorist attacks. Sixty-one percent say that people caught trying to come into the United States unlawfully should be sent immediately back to their home country; 35% would offer them some form of due process—permission to

Few Accommodations for Illegal Immigrants

When people are caught trying to enter the United States illegally, which do you think would be a better government policy?

% of respondents who say:	
To immediately send them back to their home country	61%
— OR —	
To allow them to appeal their case using legal representation and a court hearing	35%

After the terrorist attacks, some of the people who were arrested for suspected connections to terrorism had no connection at all, but they WERE in the U.S. illegally. Which comes closer to your view about the rights of these people?

% of respondents who say:	
They should have the right to see an attorney and face charges quickly	39%
— OR —	
They don't deserve such protections because they are here illegally to start with	58%

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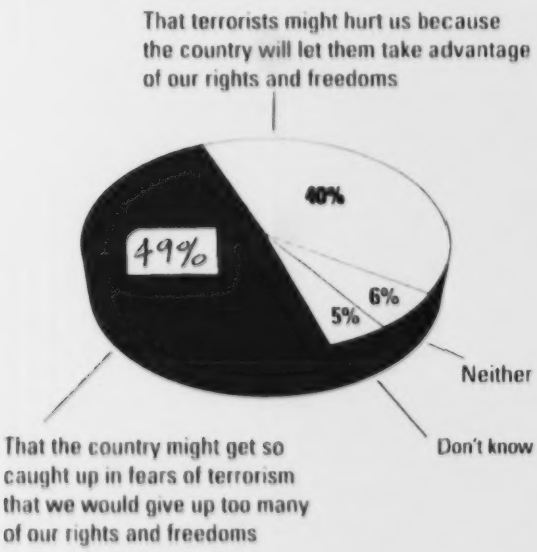
appeal their case with legal representation and a court hearing. Nor does the public show much concern about those already here, arrested after September 11 but not found to have terrorist connections. Despite the lack of court-worthy evidence, 58% of those surveyed say these individuals should not get protections a citizen would "because they are here illegally to start with," 39% say they should have the right to see an attorney and face charges.

Well, Maybe...

Those who have given a great deal of thought to constitutional issues may be distressed by some of what we report here. People's knowledge of the constitutional concepts that apply to the fight on terror is piecemeal at best. In focus groups, people responded differently to each of these war-on-terror scenarios and seemed to revise their thinking with each new argument or complication. Sometimes their thinking was fragmented or easily derailed. To the moderators, it often seemed as if they were considering these issues for the very first time.

Will Government Go Too Far?

Which of the following would you say worries you more?


That terrorists might hurt us because the country will let them take advantage of our rights and freedoms
40%
49%
6%
5%
Neither
Don't know
That the country might get so caught up in fears of terrorism that we would give up too many of our rights and freedoms

Yet despite the lack of certainty and cogency in these conversations, the focus group discussions often revealed an open-mindedness and seriousness of purpose that was heartening. Participants seemed intent on absorbing the dilemmas we posed to them, and they put in considerable effort to think about what would be fair. Clearly, most seemed to consider it very important to look for solutions that live up to our ideals and yet still help prevent future attacks.

In Nashville, one man seemed to go through an extended pro-and-con debate all by himself when he talked about the detention of some Muslims and Arab-Americans as part of the anti-terror effort. "Thousands [sic] of them have been picked up and spent months in jail," he said. "Under whatever rule it is, they can hold them indefinitely without charging them. They haven't disappeared, like, quite often, they would in another country...[The government hasn't] figured out if they've done anything wrong."

When the moderator asked him if this bothered him, he seemed to struggle with the right and wrong of the situation: "...Somewhat, to a degree. Most [sic] of them are quite often illegal; they've overextended their visas...It's very easy for some of them to be sleeper agents and ready to carry out terrorism...It's beneficial that some are questioned. I don't know if holding them for months at a time without some just cause is fair."

In the end, the public as a whole seems to echo this struggle over just how far we should go to protect ourselves. The survey included a wrap-up question that asked people what they fear most about potential conflict between protecting our rights and fighting terrorism. Even a year after September 11, Americans are divided. Forty percent say they are more worried "that terrorists might hurt us because the country will let them take advantage of our rights and freedoms;" 49% are more worried "that the country might get so caught up in fears of terrorism that we would give up too many of our rights and freedoms."

A Threat to Order

To some extent, our own legal system is still grappling with the unprecedented challenge of the terrorist attacks. The unanswerable question, of course, is how

public thinking would change if the country faced an unremitting onslaught of terror. Just how much of their liberty would Americans be willing to give up? Is there something in our traditions and our society that would protect us from wholesale abandonment of our rights?

Opinion analyst and Public Agenda chairman Daniel Yankelovich has talked about the overriding human need for safety, predictability and some sense of order. "The single most powerful political emotion is fear of disorder and instability," Yankelovich commented in an interview on public attitudes on terrorism shortly after September 11. "It transcends everything. These attacks are a threat to order. When you have a threat to order and stability, the country will sacrifice. They'll try not to, and they'll try to minimize that sacrifice, but they will do it." [1]

Still, almost a year after September 11, as we write, Americans are not there yet. Voices from many different perspectives fight any attempt to mute or roll back individual rights—voices from the right and the left and from every walk of life. This study suggests that Americans are prepared to listen. And, at least as of now, many seem committed to balancing the need for safety with an almost innate sense that some things just cross the line.

Most participants seemed to consider it very important to look for solutions that live up to our ideals and yet still help prevent future attacks.

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FINDING FIVE: OTHER THREATS TO FREEDOM

Americans recognize the dangers a too powerful government could pose to their rights, but they see other dangers as well—most notably from the private sector and from complacency among the public itself. On the issue of privacy, for example, people see the greatest threats coming from banks and credit card companies—not from government or law enforcement. What's more, many worry that the country's traditions of freedom could be weakened by apathy and lack of patriotism, especially among the young.

For the Founding Fathers, one of the Constitution's chief goals was to protect citizens from abuse of power by government. Indeed, many of the debates about constitutional issues often focus on government interventions threatening freedoms. Results from *Knowing It by Heart* and from other Public Agenda research as well suggest that Americans, on the whole, have absorbed this idea.

Most consider individual freedom the country's preeminent value and understand that government can sometimes pose a threat to it.[18] Reactions to the different constitutional dilemmas presented in this study, whether about the criminal justice system, homelessness or the war on terror, suggest that most Americans acknowledge that there is some danger to letting government go too far, even when it's for a popular cause. Still, when typical Americans are queried about what endangers freedom in contemporary times, they perceive threats coming from other sources as well.

Pointing the Finger at Government

Asked what poses the biggest threat to constitutional rights, a plurality of Americans points the finger at government. Thirty-six percent say they are concerned about "more and more government power intruding on our rights and freedoms." Yet 3 in 10 Americans (31%) say they worry about "foreign enemies trying to attack our country and our way of life." Thirty percent say "ordinary citizens taking their rights and freedoms for granted" pose the greatest danger. In effect, Americans are divided on whether the chief threat to their rights comes from here or abroad or whether, to paraphrase Pogo, the real menace is ourselves.

Some Americans, in fact, assign government a major role in *protecting* people's rights. Thirty-one percent of Americans say they count on government and the courts to protect their freedoms because "it's their job to defend our rights." Yet 35% say they look to ordinary citizens and 19% say they count most on organized civil liberties groups. The press is often characterized as the watchdog of freedom, but just 8% of Americans picked it as the entity they rely on most to protect their rights.

What's the Greatest Danger?

Which of these would you say is the biggest threat to the constitutional rights and freedoms of Americans?

% of respondents who say:	
More and more government power intruding on our rights and freedoms	36%
— OR —	
Foreign enemies trying to attack our country and our way of life	31%
— OR —	
Ordinary citizens taking their rights and freedoms for granted	30%

Some readers will no doubt disagree on whether the public as a whole is too worried about possible abuses of government power, or not worried enough. Americans themselves often send mixed messages. Surveys over the last 30 years show broad public disaffection for "big government," but much of the distaste centers on waste and mismanagement, not on outright abuse of power.[19] And just about as often as polls capture the public's distrust of government—especially the federal government—they show Americans reaching out to government to solve problems or protect them from harm.[20]

Protecting Privacy

Still, some of the most intriguing findings from *Knowing It by Heart* do not concern government at all, but rather the other threats to freedom that Americans seem to worry about. As mentioned earlier, this survey included a small set of questions on privacy, some related to the war on terror and others to more general concerns. Experts, of course, disagree on whether the Constitution implies a "right" to privacy and what its scope should be, but there is little doubt most Americans believe they have one. A 1999 Gallup Poll showed that 70% of Americans believe that "the Constitution guarantees citizens the right to privacy," whereas 27% say that it does not.[21] Surveys also suggest that this is a right people feel strongly about. A recent study for The Markle Foundation found that more than half of Americans consider their right to privacy to be "relatively absolute," compared to 38% who say that the right to privacy must be balanced against the needs of society as a whole.[22]

And while many Americans might be willing to concede some degree of privacy to prevent terrorist attacks or violent crime, the vast majority is not so willing to make compromises for purposes they deem less urgent. According to an Associated Press study, more than 8 in 10 Americans say that an individual's right to privacy is more important than the public's right to access information the government collects; just 8% consider an individual's privacy less important.[23]

The Best Guardian of Freedom

Which of these do you count on most to protect our constitutional rights and freedoms?

% of respondents who say:	
Ordinary citizens because they will not accept violations of their own rights	35%
— OR —	
The government and the courts because it's their job to defend our rights	31%
— OR —	
Civil liberties groups because they will fight to protect our rights	19%
— OR —	
The press because reporters will expose violations of our rights	8%

The Banks or the FBI?

Knowing It by Heart also confirms what other recent surveys have shown: The majority of Americans consider their "right" to privacy under assault.[24] In this study, almost 1 in 4 Americans (24%) say their right to privacy has already been lost, whereas another 41% say it is under serious threat. Over a third (34%) of Americans consider their right to privacy basically safe.

Yet when Public Agenda asked people about the greatest threat to their personal privacy, well over half (57%) pointed not to government, but to "banks and credit card companies, because they are collecting and selling marketing information about consumers." Substantially fewer (29%) see the federal government as the greatest threat, and far fewer, just 8%, are worried about threats to privacy from law enforcement. A man from Connecticut commented, "I don't trust credit card companies. That's why I don't have a credit card anymore. I know for a fact that they sell personal information about people. You lose your privacy with them."

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It's not that Americans aren't worried about the government nosing around in what they consider to be their private business. As we saw in Finding 4, a substantial number of Americans are troubled by the possibility of government "snooping" in connection with the fight on terror. And a Freedom Forum survey in 2000 showed that 8 in 10 Americans voice some level of concern that government might violate their personal privacy.[25] Still, privacy advocates who focus all of their attention on what government is or is not permitted to do would be bypassing a substantial area of public concern. Today, people give private information to a wide array of institutions and organizations, and from their point of view, government is not the only one that cannot be trusted.

Greatest Generation

The public's propensity to see dangers to freedom beyond those posed by government also emerges in Americans' thinking about the citizenry itself. In this survey and in our earlier study about what parents want their children to learn about America, focus group participants often complained spontaneously that too many Americans simply do not appreciate the rights and freedoms they have.[26] In *Knowing It by Heart*, more than 8 in 10 of those surveyed (81%) say that most Americans take the freedoms we have for granted, whereas just 18% say that most appreciate them. And, according to the public, it is clear that some groups of Americans are more appreciative than others.

This survey included a series of questions asking whether some groups in the population have more appreciation for the Constitution than others. A healthy 78% of Americans say that the World War II generation has more appreciation for the Constitution and its rights and freedoms than anyone else. Foreign-born residents also score well: 57% of Americans say that immigrants have more appreciation for the Constitution and its freedoms than other Americans do.

And the Biggest Threat to Privacy Is...

Which of these would you say is the biggest threat to your own personal right to privacy these days?

% of respondents who say:	
Banks and credit card companies, because they are collecting and selling marketing information about consumers	57%
— OR —	
The federal government because it can secretly collect information about people's private lives	29%
— OR —	
Law enforcement agencies, because they are using more aggressive tactics against crime like surveillance cameras in public areas	8%

"We Take Way Too Much for Granted"

But in sharp contrast, 75% of Americans say that younger adults have *less* appreciation for the Constitution: just 6% think they have more and 16% say there is no difference. One woman in a Texas focus group bemoaned the general complacency about the country's freedoms, but she saved a special indictment for the young: "We...take way too much for granted. We're not appreciative of what we do have because of our history and the Constitution and the blood that was shed and people that have spoken up for what is right and people that have spoken up for things that were proven wrong...The apathy that has taken place in this generation now...They need to be taught this is what this country is built on."

These results echo findings in *A Lot To Be Thankful For*. In that survey, fully 91% of the parents agreed that "too many of today's youngsters fail to appreciate how good this country is."[27] Part of the parents' angst, of course, is a reaction to what they see as ingratitude among the young. In effect, the parents are saying that today's young people are lucky to be growing up in this country and that far too few of them take the time to appreciate and honor this irreplaceable gift. But the concern also points to something deeper.

Freedom Doesn't Just Happen

As we reported earlier, Americans are about as likely to name public complacency as a threat to freedoms as they are to name the government or foreign powers. In focus groups, respondents voiced an amalgam of fears. In a Nashville focus group, one man talked about the need for people to be willing to defend the country when it faces danger. "We have to teach and remind our children [about] the people that sacrificed for those freedoms, from the Revolutionary War to the different wars we have. These freedoms didn't come because we're just a nice bunch of people. A lot of people put their lives and careers on the line several times through our history to get these freedoms, and we do take them for granted."

In Frisco, Texas, a former schoolteacher described her shock at how little some people seem to know about the country's history and government: "I'm mortified. Like on Jay Leno, when he has those interviews with those people on the street, and they don't know. Where do these people come from?...I really do think history is part of our future." Hearing her comment, another woman immediately chimed in on the need for youngsters to learn about the country's history and the importance of the public's rights and freedoms: "If it's not taught in school, in the home, you're going to see generation after generation of these things being forgotten. They're not going to be practiced. Our rights are not going to be there, because [the people] aren't going to know what they are."

Some Apathy Is Natural

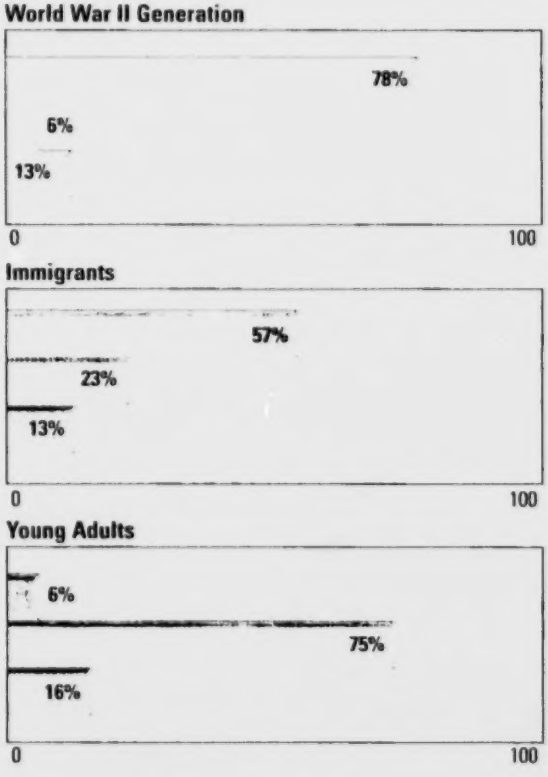
As concerned as people are, however, they do not seem entirely hopeless about the future generation. First off, many Americans admit that they are sometimes pretty complacent themselves. Although half of those surveyed (51%) say they "always appreciate the freedoms we have," virtually the same number (48%) admit that they themselves sometimes take our freedoms for granted. In the hustle and bustle of daily life, many seem to say, some level of complacency is just natural.

The Nashville man who worried that younger Americans might not be as willing to defend the country as earlier generations were, said, despite his concern, that age often enhances people's appreciation for the freedoms they have: "The older we get the more we appreciate them. You take it for granted as a teenager, and you appreciate it more as you get older."

Another man from Nashville believed he had seen a difference in the attitude of many youngsters since September 11. "I work with youth groups, 12 to 15. Since 9/11, it [has been] a wake-up call, not just for

Appreciation vs. Complacency

Compared to other Americans, do you think the following groups of people have more appreciation for the Constitution and its rights and freedoms, less appreciation, or is there no difference?



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youth, but [for] Americans in general. Since then, I see them talking more about the Constitution. I hear more about military service. I think the teenagers are starting to ask themselves, 'The country has given us a lot. What can I give back to the country?'"

More Rights for the Rich and Powerful

As we see in Finding 1, Americans believe there is another danger to the rights and freedoms promised by the Constitution—one posed by economic inequality that creates a gap between the rich and the poor. According to the results of this study, most Americans believe that the rich and powerful enjoy more rights than others and that the poor do not enjoy as many. The idea that money and power override the Constitution's promises of equality and fairness often came up spontaneously in focus groups, as did comments that even a person's ability to exercise his or her legal rights varies widely depending on income. Many participants seemed especially unnerved by what they saw as injustices in the criminal justice system.

Constitutional thinkers sometimes make a distinction between an individual's legal, constitutional rights and his or her economic situation. That is, our society promises that all are equal under the law, and all are free to practice their religion, for example, but it does not promise, and does not pretend to promise, that all will enjoy the same level of prosperity or live in similar economic circumstances. Yet, as we reported earlier, there is evidence that for many Americans, this distinction is not an apparent one, nor is it an entirely comfortable one.

"We have to teach and remind our children [about] the people that sacrificed for those freedoms, from the Revolutionary War to the different wars we have. These freedoms didn't come because we're just a nice bunch of people."

— Nashville man

FINDING SIX: THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF CITIZENSHIP

Americans strongly believe that rights and responsibilities go hand in hand. People say failing to vote or show up for jury duty are serious examples of neglecting civic duty. Although young people in America are less likely to vote—and more likely to accept excuses for not voting—they show more concern about issues of due process. Schools get mixed reviews for their approach to teaching the Constitution; senior citizens seem to have had a more interesting learning experience as schoolchildren than their younger counterparts.

Much of this report focuses on how people interpret the rights granted to citizens in the American Constitution. As we learned in Finding 2, the majority of Americans believe that the rights and freedoms we enjoy in this country go hand in hand with obligations and responsibilities. In *A Lot To Be Thankful For*, parents made clear that the first order of business to be a good citizen is to work hard, stay off the dole and be willing to work with and respect others who are different from you.[28]

In *Knowing It by Heart*, it is clear that Americans also place a great deal of importance in things like jury duty and voting. Whether it's a patriotic instinct or merely a sense of decency, Americans voice little respect for those who shirk their civic responsibilities. To truly earn the rewards of democracy—individual rights and freedoms—people must attend to the hard work of being a good citizen.

Americans have their own hierarchy of rights and wrongs when it comes to measures of civic responsibility. In this study we asked about three specifics—attending jury duty, voting on election days and contacting elected officials to share views.

Doing Your Jury Duty

For all the griping that often follows receipt of a jury summons, more than 7 in 10 (72%) Americans think "people who routinely avoid jury duty are failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship." Only 1 in 4 (25%) think it is understandable that people avoid jury duty given "how busy people's lives are these days." This is similar to the finding in *A Lot To Be Thankful For* where a majority of parents (52%) said that a person who is called for jury duty but always finds a way to avoid it is a "bad citizen."[29] As one woman from California said, "We all have a responsibility to uphold our freedoms in this country. And anything we can do that keeps our freedoms strong—in this case, serving on a jury. A jury enables someone to have a fair trial, and it's our duty to uphold that." Despite the public's outright disparagement of jury decisions in a number of high-profile trials,[30] these findings indicate that most Americans still view jury duty as a very important civic responsibility indeed.

"Go and Vote"

When it comes to what may be the classic measure of citizenship—voting—Americans make a strong connection between voting as both a right and a responsibility. Almost 7 in 10 (68%) think that "people who are eligible to vote but never do so are failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship," compared to about 3 in 10 (29%) who think it's understandable that these people don't vote "because of the quality of candidates running for office these days." In *A Lot To Be Thankful For*, 51% of parents defined a person who is able to vote but never does as a "bad citizen."[31]

"In my point of view, if you don't vote then keep your mouth shut. You didn't vote, you didn't participate, live with the results."
—Nashville man

In the focus groups conducted for *Knowing It by Heart*, people across the country were unwavering when they spoke about the importance of voting and the honor

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they feel to have such a right. A woman from Texas said: "It is such a privilege we have here to be able to voice different opinions and to do so peacefully and still shake hands and be friends afterwards...a privilege that so often is ignored." Others felt that those who don't vote, at some level, give up their "right" to partake in even the friendliest of discussions about politics. There were many nods of agreement when one gentleman in Nashville said, "In my point of view, if you don't vote then keep your mouth shut. You didn't vote, you didn't participate, live with the results."

For an African American woman, voting was a symbolic way of paying back those who fought for her right to do it. "I think that black Americans have a responsibility [to vote]...Because of our people who have been hosed down, beat down, killed, people trying to keep them from voting. Yes, I think we have a responsibility to vote. You go and vote," she said.

Maybe There's a Reason

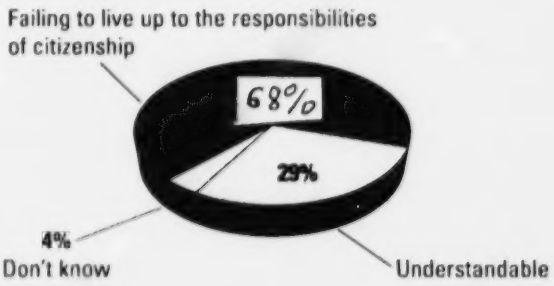
As we described earlier, people in focus groups also spoke strongly about the problems they see with the political system and about the overall disappointment they have with many of their elected representatives. It is therefore not surprising to find such a sizeable number (29%) who believe that the poor quality of candidates is a reasonable explanation for so many people staying away from the voting booth. A man from Philadelphia talked about politicians who sit back "and wait to fatten their pockets. You have some politicians who really care about what's going on. But you have a lot of them who don't really care about the people."

Have You Got Something to Say?

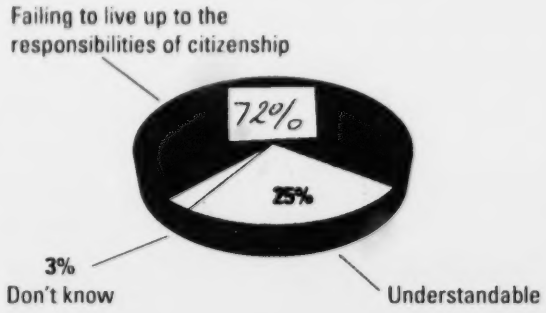
For the most part, majorities of Americans view jury service and voting as important responsibilities. But the public seems to be of two different minds when it comes to whether taking initiative to let elected officials know about important concerns is a requirement of citizenship. Fifty-two percent say "people who never write or call their elected representatives about issues they care about" are not living up to their civic duty, compared to 43% who say this is understandable "because elected officials don't pay attention anyway."

The Responsibilities of Citizenship

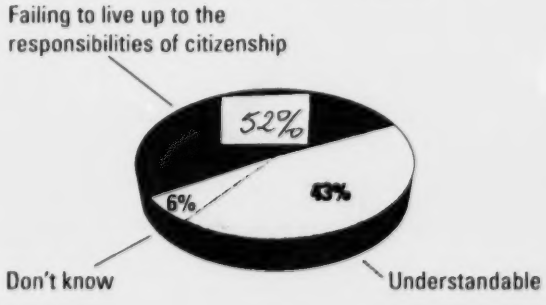
Do you think that people who are eligible to vote but never do so are failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship, or is this understandable because of the quality of candidates running for office these days?



Do you think that people who routinely avoid jury duty are failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship, or is this understandable given how busy people's lives are these days?



Do you think that people who never write or call their elected representatives about issues they care about are failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship, or is this understandable because elected officials don't pay attention anyway?



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On the one hand, this finding suggests a public that may be skeptical about the intentions of their elected officials or cynical about government's capacity to improve people's lives. But comments in the focus groups also suggest that many Americans may have an optimistic outlook when it comes to the power of individual citizens to work together for change. "Overall, we still have the opportunity to yell at the government and say hey," said a California woman. "If you get enough people to band together, you actually can make a difference."

Some Less Likely to Speak Up

Interestingly, when it comes to questions about voting and jury duty, there are virtually no differences between the views of Hispanic, African American and white Americans. But on the question of making an effort to get in touch with elected officials about issues of concern, Hispanic Americans stand out. Latinos, the fastest growing minority group in the country today, are garnering a great deal of political attention and are being courted by elected officials from both sides of the aisle.[32] Yet they are more likely to say it's understandable that people don't tell their representatives about their issues of concern because they "don't pay attention anyway" (56% of Hispanic respondents, compared to 42% of African American and 41% of white). One Hispanic woman from Texas made this point clear when she said, "I don't call elected officials because they wouldn't listen to me. They're only interested in my vote. Once they get into office they forget about the promises they made and they forget about the people. It doesn't matter whether they're Republicans or Democrats…They made so many promises for so many years to the Hispanic community. They don't do the things they say, so why bother calling them."

Are the Young More Apathetic?

In Finding 5, we reported that younger Americans are perceived to be less appreciative than others of the freedoms we have here in the United States. To some extent, the survey findings show evidence that this perception may be accurate. Only 56% of the under-30 generation participating in this survey report that they voted in the 2000 Presidential election, compared to 91% of those 65 or older.*

* *It is important, though, to account for the possibility that these numbers may be inflated; self-reporting of voter participation is habitually overstated in public opinion surveys. According to the U.S. Census Bureau's* Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2000, *only 43% of citizens under 35 and 69% of citizens 65 or older actually voted in the 2000 Presidential election.*

Generational Differences

When people are caught trying to enter the United States illegally, which do you think would be a better government policy?

	18-29	65 and older
Immediately send them back to their home country	48%	67%
— OR —		
Allow them to appeal their case using legal representation and a court hearing	46%	27%

Which comes closest to your view about the criminal justice system?

	18-29	65 and older
Putting guilty people in jail should be the most important goal of the criminal justice system	25%	28%
— OR —		
It's just as important to protect the rights of the accused as it is to put guilty people in jail	58%	45%
— OR —		
Even if this means some guilty people are let go, it's important to protect the rights of the accused	14%	19%

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But while they may choose not to exercise their right to vote, younger Americans do seem to give more attention to some constitutional principles concerning due process and the criminal justice system. For example, under-30s (46%) are much more likely than those 65 or older (27%) to think people caught trying to enter the country illegally should be allowed to appeal their case rather than be immediately deported. And a majority of people under 30 (58%) say, "It's just as important to protect the rights of the accused as it is to put guilty people in jail," compared to less than half of those 65 or older (45%).

There is an entire body of literature that attempts to explain the civic disaffection of young people.[3] And in this study, young people themselves seem to gravitate toward justifications for why they might find something else to do on Election Day, rather than to say they are simply shirking their civic duty. For each of the measures we asked about—jury duty, voting and contacting elected officials to make one's views known—young Americans between 18 and 29 years old are considerably more likely than those 65 or older to accept as "understandable" each of the following: that people may avoid jury duty because of the hectic and busy nature of people's lives these days (38% vs. 17%); that people don't vote because of the quality of candidates running for office these days (39% vs. 17%); and that people don't make an effort to contact their elected officials about their important concerns because elected officials don't pay attention anyway (51% vs. 36%).

Teaching Young People about History

Some may say that one of the main reasons young people are not more attentive to the responsibilities of living in a democracy is because they have never really been taught American history in any meaningful or engaging way. If the focus groups are any indication, people of all ages certainly have little trouble remembering awful school experiences around the Constitution. "They taught me that I wanted to get out of class real quick," was one man's retort. "It seems to go on forever in sixth grade," chuckled a California woman. Some, like this man in Nashville, complained that what he learned seemed irrelevant at the time:

"It was like, what's this going to do for me? It's like memorizing a poem you hate…It's nice to have, but how am I going to use this? I can use math, French, Spanish, but what am I going to do with this Constitution thing?"

Recalling their glory days of middle and high school, about 3 in 10 (29%) Americans say they can recall their own school making a very serious effort to teach the Constitution, and virtually the same number (30%) say their school made a somewhat serious effort. Others recall only minimal effort (29%) or none at all (4%). Eight percent could not remember enough to say. In what may be an encouraging finding for many educators, almost 4 in 10 former students (39%) say their teachers taught the Constitution "in an interesting and memorable way." But another (34%) say it was mostly "dull and forgettable." Understandably, since many of the survey participants probably had not set foot in a classroom in decades, a sizeable number (24%) do not remember enough to say.

Senior citizens may indeed have had a better, more effective learning experience when they were in school…they are only half as likely as others to say that their lessons on the Constitution were boring and unmemorable.

The Generation Gap

But these findings also strongly suggest that younger people's classroom experience may have fallen short. It seems that senior citizens may indeed have had a better, more effective learning experience when they were in school, in terms of both the approach their teachers took and the effort their schools made in teaching about the Constitution. In comparison to younger people, senior citizens are only half as likely to say that their lessons on the Constitution were boring and unmemorable (17% compared to 37% of 18-29 year olds). By the same token, 38% of those 65 or older say their school made a very serious effort to teach the Constitution compared to 23% of younger Americans.

We saw this generational difference play out in an instructive way in one of the first focus groups we conducted. A young man from Philadelphia, who had just graduated from high school told us: "I'm sitting here clueless about some of this stuff and that's because my school never taught me. We weren't allowed to take the books home…Everybody is just copying right out of the book, not learning. So I didn't really learn anything, nothing." An older woman in the group immediately responded: "When I went to school, we were so very interested in learning at that time that school wasn't enough…We also went home and studied and got books from the library. The teacher was that good. We wanted to learn even a little more than what he taught us. That's the way it used to be. That's why we were much smarter then than they are now."

Parents Can Step up to the Plate

Clearly, there is work to be done for those who want our young people to grow into knowledgeable, civic-minded citizens. The findings in *Knowing It by Heart* provide something of a blueprint for what the public wants Americans to learn and know about their history. Requiring kids to learn the basic facts and dates may seem trivial to some, but most Americans see value in knowing the details. And while it's safe to say that most Americans would want schoolchildren to learn all the good things about America, they do not want the bad parts to be sugarcoated.

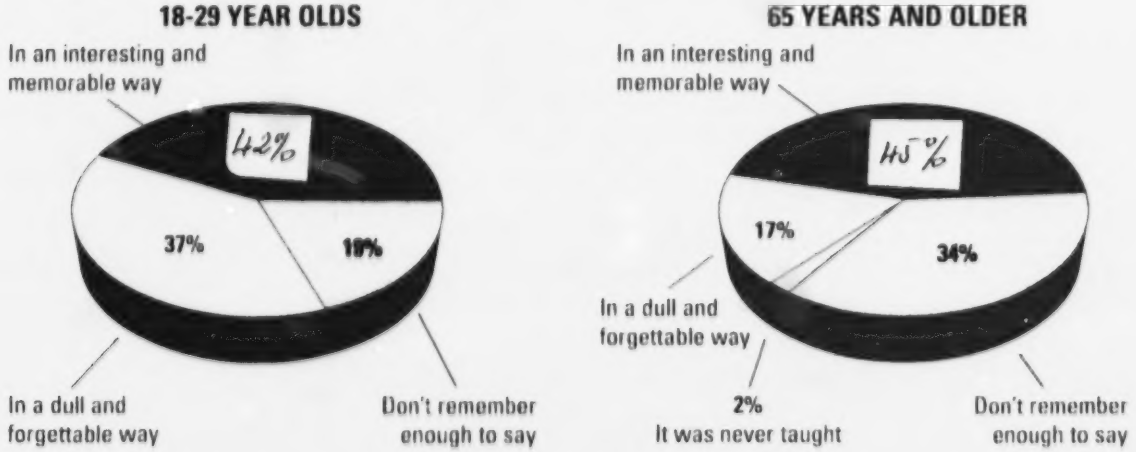
However, this is not only the responsibility of the schools. Parents also have a part to play. In Texas, a mother spoke about how she drills into her children the sacrifices that others who have gone before them have made. "My mother's brother was killed at Iwo Jima. So I have a history that has been handed down to me—that my uncle lost his life for his country so that I have the freedoms that I have today…and I passed it on to my daughters." A father in Dayton said: "Parents have a responsibility. When the Fourth of July comes along, explain to the kids what the Fourth of July is—not just picnics and fireworks or a trip to the beach…[Explain] this is why we're doing this; this is what happened. People died so we can have the freedoms that we have and celebrate them on this particular date."

Responsibility to Our Young

If schools and parents today were given a report card for their performance on educating youngsters about

Lessons to Remember?

Thinking back to when you studied the Constitution in school, would you say that your teachers taught it in a dull and forgettable way, in an interesting and memorable way, or don't you remember enough to say?



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the U.S. Constitution and its history, their grade would probably be "needs improvement." There is evidence that many young Americans are not being turned on to the excitement of early American history and the gripping tale of the writing of the Constitution. There is also ample evidence that many Americans of all ages don't understand, nor can they articulate, the Constitution's basic tenets. With this in mind, many of those interviewed for this study wondered how we can expect young people to internalize the ideals and values, the rights and responsibilities, the eternal American optimism and hopefulness embodied in the U.S. Constitution. "We're failing our youth," said a California woman. "And we're not going to remain a successful country if we don't fix that."

A sizable number of parents in this study —2 out of 5 (41%)— say they have taken their own child with them to the voting booth on Election Day. Perhaps this is a sign that many children, at least in some small way, are being exposed to the privilege—and the responsibility— of citizenship.

"Parents have a responsibility. When the Fourth of July comes along, explain to the kids what the Fourth of July is— not just picnics and fireworks or a trip to the beach…"

—Ohio father

AFTERWORD

By Deborah Wadsworth
President, Public Agenda

For a country founded upon the principles of popular sovereignty, respect for the individual, and a capitalist market economy, a remarkably dismissive attitude toward members of the public surfaces again and again throughout our history. From Alexander Hamilton in the 18th century to Walter Lippmann in the 20th, some very distinguished Americans have detailed a litany of the public's shortcomings ranging from its propensity for intemperate judgments to its gullibility and volatility. More recently, commentators have bemoaned Americans' ignorance about their political leaders, complacency about their civic responsibilities and their seemingly rampant cynicism and mistrust of the institutions of government.

What People Don't Know

Similarly when an issue with constitutional dimensions arises, pundits have been quick to cite polling data that demonstrate how little people know about the document to which this nation owes its form of government. Among the typical citizens interviewed for this study, many acknowledge that they are unable to cite chapter or verse from our Constitution, and few could recall many rights beyond those of freedom of speech or religion. By such a yardstick, I suppose one would have to agree that the nation's citizenry is woefully under-educated about the fundamentals of our American democracy.

But a careful reading of *Knowing It by Heart* suggests that the public is no fool. While people may indeed have few historical facts or detailed specifics on the tip of the tongue, Americans have an internalized understanding of the values that our Constitution embraces and its relevance to modern life. Americans say they feel free and believe they have license to be whomever they wish to be. Their first order of business is taking care of themselves, working hard and living a law-abiding life. I would suggest this is not a bad translation or internalization of the values of a document that conveys the need to balance freedom with responsibility.

What People Have Absorbed

Contrary to a string of widely publicized poll findings suggesting that Americans are ready to drastically curtail the rights of the accused in some instances or the freedoms of the press in others,[14] *Knowing It by Heart* suggests people are capable of measured and balanced responses when challenged with particular circumstances. Those we interviewed in focus group discussions and in the survey struggled to define the boundaries they would draw in limiting freedom of speech. We posed scenarios of increasingly complex situations, forcing them to think carefully about the trade-offs and consequences of their judgments. And, not unlike the document's 18th-century authors, these contemporary Americans were far more willing than one might have imagined to live with the kind of ambiguity that constitutional issues have raised from the very beginning.

Americans were far more willing than one might have imagined to live with the kind of ambiguity that constitutional issues have raised from the very beginning.

Based on this study, Americans appear to be sensitive to the need to maintain a balance between protecting the rights of the individual and ensuring our collective safety, a finding that challenges some prevailing assumptions about Americans' willingness to abrogate fundamental protections in the name of fighting terrorism. But it is also true that, to date, Americans have yet to develop a unified or consistent philosophy about how to balance constitutional principles with the need for heightened security. A striking number, 90%, say that since the terrorist attacks on America it is more important than ever to understand our Constitution. Findings throughout this study echo the tension of the debate that occurred in the late 18th century— a debate that was not so much resolved as built into the fabric of our national identity.

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Ideals Unmet

Much has been written of late about Americans' renewed sense of patriotism. And, while it is true that large majorities celebrate the ideals on which our Constitution is based, and express a love of country that is both romantic and pragmatic, they also recognize serious impediments to our domestic tranquility. Respondents often made distinctions between our success in protecting civil liberties while performing far less well in addressing economic or social inequalities. Significant disparities continue to exist, they say, that leave us far short of achieving the goals ratified two hundred and fifteen years ago. Sixty-five percent believe that citizens of wealth or power actually have more rights than others. And, more than half of Americans believe that as long as so many in America remain poor or homeless, our nation is failing to live up to its ideals.

Unforgettable It Wasn't

In many ways, *Knowing It by Heart* presents a curious paradox. Americans appear to have absorbed a fundamental understanding of the values of the Constitution and the basic tenets of our democracy. Yet, they have done so without having any finely honed awareness of the tensions that are actually embodied in the document and in the practice of our form of government. It's as if they've mastered the ability to speak the English language without being able to quote the rules of grammar or describe the structures of speech we depend on. Many acknowledge that they have not mastered the particulars, and they are as likely to characterize their introduction to the Constitution—during their school years—as "dull and forgettable" as they are to say it was noteworthy. What they understand appears to have been absorbed by osmosis from daily life or the media, even as they insist that serious effort should be made to teach the particulars to youngsters today.

Most Americans say they believe that Americans of the World War II generation and immigrants—people who have chosen America as their home—have more appreciation for the Constitution than the public at large. Many may worry that further slippage may be occurring among young adults, who are deemed by 75% of Americans as having less appreciation for the country's rights and freedoms than others.

Engaging What Is Really Important

Those in the press, education and the nonprofit sector who have despaired at the seemingly low level of public interest and knowledge about the Constitution might well take heart from this study. Two-thirds of our respondents maintain it is absolutely essential for ordinary Americans to have a detailed knowledge of their constitutional rights and freedoms. *Knowing It by Heart* also suggests that even beyond both a mastery of the particulars and a natural understanding of the values we live by, something else may be needed. For much of our history, we have been sheltered from threatening external forces and been able to depend on those who devote their lives to being watchdogs of our constitutional rights. But the time may come when it will be essential for all Americans to have a better grasp of the tensions inherent in our democracy.

It's as if they've mastered the ability to speak the English language without being able to quote the rules of grammar or describe the structures of speech we depend on.

Based on what we see here, Americans are far more open to engaging the fundamentally important issues in the Constitution than they have been given credit for. Some believe that understanding the Constitution will make people better voters and citizens; others believe that it will reinforce a sense of appreciation and respect for America's history; and still others think that knowing the Constitution makes it harder for government to abuse one's rights. There is clearly fertile ground here for nurturing serious education, and the importance of imparting this tradition to younger generations cannot be overestimated. The National Constitution Center will play a vital role in this endeavor.

ENDNOTES

1. Princeton Survey Research Associates (sponsored by Pew Research Center). *People & The Press 1999 Millennium Survey.* National telephone survey of 1,546 adults conducted April 6-May 6, 1999. "As I read a list, tell me whether you think each thing (Our constitution) is a major reason (85%), a minor reason (10%) or not a reason (4%) that America has been so successful in this century." Don't know/Refused (1%).

2. Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *A Lot To Be Thankful For: What Parents Want Children To Learn About America.* Public Agenda, 1998, p.9. National telephone survey of 801 parents of public school students conducted September 3-16, 1998. "Which of the following comes closer to your own view about the U.S.? The U.S. is a unique country that stands for something special in the world (84%) or the U.S. is just another country whose system is no better or worse than other countries (13%)." Don't know (3%).

3. See, for example, ABC News/Washington Post Poll. National telephone survey of 1,513 adults conducted January 11-15, 2001. "We'd like to know what kind of priority you want to see George W. Bush and the Congress give to some issues. For each one, please tell me if it (Improving race relations) should receive the highest priority (24%), a high priority but not the highest (42%), a middle priority (26%), or a lower priority (6%)." None (1%); No opinion (1%).

4. The Gallup Organization. National telephone survey of 1,014 adults conducted June 28-July 1, 2001. "What are the first 10 Amendments to the Constitution called?" Bill of Rights (57%); Incorrect response (6%); No opinion (37%).

5. Shepardson Stern & Kaminsky (sponsored by the National Constitution Center). Constitutional Knowledge Survey. National telephone survey of 1,000 adults conducted September 1997. "How many Senators are there in the U.S. Congress?" 100 (48%); 50 (12%); 25 (2%); Other (9%); Don't know (29%); Refused (1%).

6. See, for example, Dan Andrews, "Court rules city can hospitalize homeless woman." *United Press International,* December 18, 1987, Domestic News.

7. See, for example, NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll. National telephone survey of 809 adults conducted November 9-11, 2001. "Do you think the war on terrorism in Afghanistan is or is not worth risking substantial numbers of American military casualties?" Yes, Worth risking casualties (74%); No, not worth risking casualties (16%); Not sure (10%).

8. See, for example, NBC News/Wall Street Journal Poll. National telephone survey of 1,008 adults conducted June 8-10, 2002. "When it comes to dealing with the war on terrorism, do you approve (75%) or disapprove (20%) of the job George W. Bush is doing?" Not sure: 5%.

   See also, Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll. National telephone survey of 802 adults conducted March 8-9, 2002. "Do you approve (91%) or disapprove (7%) of the current U.S. military action (in Afghanistan) in the war on terrorism?" No opinion (2%).

9. See, for example, CBS News/New York Times Poll. National telephone survey of 1,024 adults conducted October 25-28, 2001. "Overall, how would you say the Bush administration has handled the recent anthrax outbreaks — have they done an excellent job (14%), a good job (47%), a fair job (31%), or a poor job (6%)?" Don't know/no answer: 2%.

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10. Gallup/CNN/USA Today Poll. National telephone survey of 1,032 adults conducted September 14-15, 2001. "Please tell me if you would favor or oppose each of the following as a means of preventing terrorist attacks in the United States. How about...requiring Arabs, including those who are U.S. citizens, to undergo special, more intensive security checks before boarding airplanes in the U.S.?" Favor (58%); Oppose (41%); No opinion (1%).

    "How about...requiring Arabs, including those who are U.S. citizens, to carry a special ID?" Favor (49%); Oppose (49%); No opinion (2%).

11. Princeton Survey Research Associates/Newsweek Poll. National telephone survey of 1,005 adults conducted September 20-21, 2001. "In response to the terrorist attacks (in New York City and Washington D.C., September 11, 2001), do you think the United States should put Arabs and Arab-Americans in this country under special surveillance, or that it would be a mistake to target a nationality group, as was done with Japanese-Americans after Pearl Harbor?" Should increase surveillance (27%); Would be a mistake (68%); Don't know (5%).

12. Farkas, Steve, Jean Johnson, et al. *Aggravating Circumstances: A Status Report on Rudeness in America.* Public Agenda, 2002. p.38. National telephone survey of 2,013 adults conducted January 2-23, 2002. "Law enforcement officials these days may look at people with Middle Eastern accents or features with greater suspicion because they are concerned about terrorism. Which comes closer to your own view?" There's nothing particularly wrong with this (11%); It's understandable but you wish it didn't happen (67%); There is no excuse for this (21%); Don't know (1%).

13. ABC News/Washington Post Poll. National telephone survey of 1,004 adults conducted June 7-9, 2002. "What do you think is more important right now—for the FBI to investigate possible terrorist threats, even if that intrudes on personal privacy, or for the FBI not to intrude on personal privacy, even if that limits its ability to investigate possible terrorist threats?" Investigate threats (79%); Respect privacy (18%); No opinion (3%).

14. See, for example, Fox News/Opinion Dynamics Poll. National telephone survey of 900 registered voters conducted January 30-31, 2002. "Do you favor (37%) or oppose (52%) the federal government giving financial compensation to the families of illegal immigrants who were killed in the September 11 (2001) attacks (on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon)?" Not sure (11%).

15. The Gallup Organization. National telephone survey of 1,004 adults conducted April 3-9, 2000. "For each one (Illegal Immigration) please tell me how serious of a problem you consider it to be for our country—extremely serious (15%), very serious (30%), somewhat serious (45%), or not serious at all (8%)." No opinion (2%).

16. See, for example, CBS News/New York Times Poll. National telephone survey of 1,052 adults conducted December 7-10, 2001. "Do you think most of the people who have moved to the United States in the last few years are here legally (29%), or are most of them here illegally (53%)?" Half & half (3%); Don't know/no answer (15%).

    See also, Zogby International (Sponsored by Center for Immigration Studies). Immigration and Terrorism Survey. National telephone survey with 1,018 adult likely voters conducted September 15-16, 2001. "Do you think the government is doing enough (18%) or not enough (77%) to control the border and to screen people allowed into the country?" Don't know (5%).

17. See Public Agenda Online, www.publicagenda.org/specials/terrorism/terror_interview.htm

18. *A Lot To Be Thankful For*, p.12. National telephone survey of 801 parents of public school students. "Thinking about what it means to live in the United States, which of the following three things is most important to you personally?" Prosperity and economic opportunity (25%); Personal freedoms (61%); Political freedoms (13%); Don't know (1%).

19. See, for example, *From Optimism for the Future to Hope for Stability: American Attitudes Toward Government 1995*. Survey conducted for the Council for Excellence in Government by the firms of Peter D. Hart and Robert M. Teeter. Telephone survey of 1,003 adults conducted March 16-18, 1995. "Which one of the following four items is your biggest [and second biggest] complaint about the federal government?" Wastes money because it is not well managed (61%); Spends too much on wrong things (56%); Solutions to problems are ineffective (30%); Takes too long to solve problems (29%).

20. See, for example, Princeton Survey Research Associates (Sponsored by the Pew Center for People and the Press). Telephone survey of 1,200 adults conducted June 13-17, 2001. "In your opinion, should the federal government create national standards to protect the rights of patients in HMO's and managed care plans, or would this get the government too involved in health care?" Government should create national standards (58%); Too much government involvement (30%); Don't know (12%).

    See also, Gallup Organization (Sponsored by CNN and USA Today). Telephone survey of 1,018 adults conducted January 5-7, 2001. "Please tell me how much each of the following proposals would improve public schools. How about providing federal money for local school districts to use as they see fit — a great deal (40%), fair amount (40%), not much (12%), or not at all (7%)?" No opinion (1%).

21. The Gallup Organization. National telephone survey of 1,054 adults conducted February 8-9, 1999. "Do you think the Constitution guarantees citizens the right to privacy?" Yes, guarantees right to privacy (70%); No, does not guarantee right to privacy (27%); No opinion (3%).

22. *Toward a Framework for Internet Accountability Survey*. Survey by The Markle Foundation, conducted by Greenberg Quinlan Rosner Research. National telephone survey of 2,393 adults conducted October 2-23, 2000. "(Now I am going to read you some pairs of statements, and I want you to tell me whether you agree more with the first or more with the second statement.)...1. My right to privacy is relatively absolute; 2. Sometimes my right to privacy must be balanced against the needs of society as a whole." 1st statement much more (44%); 1st statement somewhat more (14%); 2nd statement somewhat more (23%); 2nd statement much more (15%); Neither (vol.) (1%); Don't know/refused (3%).

23. Associated Press Poll. National telephone survey of 1,008 adults conducted February 12-16, 1997. Interviewing was conducted by ICR Survey Research Group. "Generally speaking, do you think an individual's right to privacy is more important (84%) or less important (8%) than people's right to have access to information that the government collects?" Both equally important (vol.) (3%); Don't know (5%).

24. See, for example, NPR News/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. The results of this project are based on two nationwide telephone surveys, a main survey and a follow-up. The main survey was conducted in English and Spanish between Oct. 31 and Nov. 12, 2001 among a random representative sample of 1,208 respondents 18 years of age or older. The follow-up survey was conducted between November 20 and 25, 2001 among a random representative sample of 1,010 respondents 18 years of age or older. The fieldwork for both surveys was conducted by ICR/International Communications Research. "How concerned are you about the invasion of your personal privacy in the United States today?" Very concerned (35%); Somewhat concerned (27%); Only a little concerned (21%); Not at all concerned (16%).

25. Freedom Forum, American Society of Newspaper Editors, conducted by Center for Survey Research & Analysis, University of Connecticut. National telephone survey of 1,005 adults conducted November 9-19, 2000. "How concerned are you, if at all, that your personal privacy might be violated by the government?" Very concerned (50%); Somewhat concerned (30%); Not too concerned (14%); Not at all concerned (7%); Don't know/No answer (1%).

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26. *A Lot To Be Thankful For*, p.17.

27. *A Lot To Be Thankful For.* "Too many of today's youngsters fail to appreciate how good this country is." Strongly agree (61%); Somewhat agree (30%); Somewhat disagree (6%); Strongly disagree (2%); Don't know (1%).

28. *A Lot To Be Thankful For*, Page 34. "What if a person lives on government programs like welfare even though they are able to work? Would you consider them to be a bad citizen or not?" Yes (77%); No (19%); Don't know (4%).

    "What if a person refuses to work with people from different racial or ethnic backgrounds? Would you consider them to be a bad citizen or not?" Yes (72%); No (25%); Don't know (3%).

29. *A Lot To Be Thankful For.* "What if a person who is called for jury duty but always finds a way to avoid it. Would you consider them to be a bad citizen or not?" Yes (52%); No (42%); Don't know (5%).

30. See, for example Gallup Organization (sponsored by Cable News Network, USA Today). National telephone survey of 1,604 adults conducted September 29-October 1, 1996. "As you may know, the jury in the O.J. Simpson trial last year found Simpson not guilty on the charges that he murdered Nicole Brown Simpson and Ron Goldman. Based on the facts presented in that case, do you think the jurors made the right decision (23%) or the wrong decision (57%)?" Don't know/Refused (20%).

31. *A Lot To Be Thankful For*, Page 34. "What if a person who is able to vote never votes? Would you consider them to be a bad citizen or not?" Yes (51%); No (46%); Don't know (3%).

32. See, for example, Richard S. Dunham and Alexandra Starr, "Wooing Latinos: How far will Bush go?" *Business Week*, July 30, 2001, p.43.

33. See, for example, Benschoten, Elizabeth Van, "Youth-Led Civic Organizing: Countering Perceptions of Apathy and Redefining Civic Engagement." *National Civic Review*, December 22, 2000, No.4, Vol.89, p.301.

34. See, for example, Washington Post/Kaiser Family Foundation/Harvard Americans on Values Follow-up Survey 1998. National telephone survey of 1,200 adults conducted August 10-27, 1998. "If you absolutely had to choose between each of the following two values, which is more important to you, personally? Being tough on criminals (76%), or protecting the rights of those accused of crime (17%)?" No opinion (2%).

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METHODOLOGY

Knowing It by Heart is based on a nationwide telephone survey of 1,520 adults aged 18 or older. The survey was preceded by six focus groups conducted in sites across the country as well as 18 in-depth interviews with legal scholars and others who are engaged in constitutional issues.

The Survey

Telephone interviews were conducted with a nationally representative cross-section of 1,520 adult members of the general public between July 10 and July 24, 2002. The interviews averaged 29 minutes in length. The interviews were conducted using a random sample of households and a standard, random-digit-dialing technology whereby every household in the 48 contiguous states had an equal chance of being contacted, including those with unlisted numbers. The margin of error for the sample of 1,520 adults is plus or minus three percentage points; the margin of error is higher when comparing percentages across subgroups.

The Questionnaire

The questionnaire was designed by Public Agenda, and all interpretation of the data reflected in this report was done by Public Agenda. As in all surveys, question order effects and other non-sampling sources of error can sometimes affect results. Steps were taken to minimize these, including extensively pre-testing the survey instrument and randomizing the order in which some questions and answer categories were read.

The survey was fielded by Robinson and Muenster Associates, Inc. of Sioux Falls, South Dakota. Sample was provided by Survey Sampling, Inc.

The Focus Groups

Focus groups allow for an in-depth, qualitative exploration of the dynamics underlying the public's attitudes toward complex issues. Insights from these groups were important to the survey design, and quotes were drawn from them to give voice to attitudes captured statistically through the survey interviews.

A total of six focus groups were conducted with members of the general public in March and April 2002 in the following cities: Danbury, CT; Philadelphia, PA (exclusively with African Americans); Frisco, TX; Walnut Creek, CA; Nashville, TN; and Dayton, OH. In addition, 18 formal interviews with experts—legal scholars, practicing attorneys, a judge, educators, leaders of nonprofit organizations and others knowledgeable about the field—were conducted to help inform the survey instrument for the focus groups and the telephone survey of the general public.

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SURVEY RESULTS

Knowing It by Heart: Americans Consider the Constitution and its Meaning

This study is based on a nationally representative cross-section of 1,520 adults aged 18 or older.

Results of less than .5% are signified by an asterisk. Results of zero are signified by a dash. Responses may not always total 100% due to rounding. Combining answer categories may produce slight discrepancies between the numbers in these survey results and numbers in the report.

Q1 – In the future, when the United States is compared to other nations in terms of being democratic and free, do you think it will be remembered as the MOST democratic and free, that it was right up there with the best of them, that it did not stand out, or that it fell far short?

52% The most democratic and free

34% Right up there with the best of them

4% Did not stand out

6% Fell far short

4% Don't Know

Q2 – There are some groups and governments in other countries that hate the United States. Which comes closest to your view of why they hate the U.S.?

38% They feel threatened by our freedoms and ideals

29% They see us as a bully who throws our weight around

27% They are jealous of our economic success

5% [VOL.] None of these

2% Don't Know

Q3 – Do you think of the United States as a country where rights are guaranteed and it's easy for people to exercise them, or as a country where rights are on shaky ground and are hard to exercise?

65% A country where rights are guaranteed and it's easy for people to exercise them

31% A country where rights are on shaky ground and are hard to exercise

4% Don't Know

Q4 – These days, do you feel that there are too many limits on people's rights, that there are not enough limits, or are things OK the way they are?

33% Too many limits on people's rights

20% Not enough limits

43% Things OK the way they are

5% Don't Know

Q5 – Do you think that most Americans appreciate the freedoms we have or do most Americans take them for granted?

18% Most Americans appreciate the freedoms we have

81% Most take them for granted

1% Don't Know

Q6 – And thinking about yourself, would you say you always appreciate the freedoms we have or do you sometimes take them for granted?

51% Always appreciate the freedoms we have

48% Sometimes take them for granted

1% Don't Know

Q7 – Do you think it's absolutely essential for ordinary Americans to have a detailed knowledge of their constitutional rights and freedoms, or is it just important but not essential?

67% Absolutely essential

33% Important but not essential

1% Don't Know

Q8 – How much would you say YOU know about the Constitution and the rights and freedoms it spells out? Would you say that you have a detailed knowledge, that you are generally familiar with it or is this an area you feel hazy and vague about?

16% Have a detailed knowledge

66% Generally familiar with it

17% An area I feel hazy and vague about

* Don't Know

Q9 – When was the last time, if ever, that you read the Constitution or a portion of it–was it somewhat recently, a long time ago, never or don't you remember enough to say?

42% Somewhat recently

50% A long time ago

3% Never

5% Don't remember enough to say

* Don't Know

Q10 – If very few Americans had a detailed knowledge of the Constitution, do you think that it would be dangerous for the country, that it would not matter much, or that it would be sad but not dangerous?

38% It would be dangerous for the country

16% It would not matter much

42% It would be sad but not dangerous

4% Don't Know

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Q11 – Which of the following three statements is the best reason for you to know and understand the Constitution?

44% Knowing it makes you a better citizen or voter

28% Knowing it makes it much harder for the government and police to abuse your rights

26% Knowing it shows that you appreciate and respect your history

2% Don't Know

1% [VOL.] None of these

Q12 – Thinking back to your school days, how much of an effort did your schools make to teach the Constitution? Would you say they made a very serious effort, a somewhat serious effort, a minimal effort, no effort at all, or don't you remember enough to say?

29% A very serious effort

30% A somewhat serious effort

29% A minimal effort

4% No effort at all

8% Don't remember enough to say

1% Don't Know

Q13 – Thinking back to when you studied the Constitution in school, would you say that your teachers taught it in a dull and forgettable way, in an interesting and memorable way, or don't you remember enough to say?

34% In a dull and forgettable way

39% In an interesting and memorable way

24% Don't remember enough to say

1% [VOL] It was never taught

1% Don't Know

Q14 – When teaching American history to kids in middle and high school, do you think it's better to place the country in the best possible light, or do you think it's better to teach the bad and the good, warts and all?

9% Place the country in the best possible light

90% Teach the bad and the good, warts and all

1% Don't Know

Q15 – Which comes closest to your view about the Constitution?

19% Our Constitution is so good that we should do as much as we can to bring it to other countries

66% It is good, but we should only help other countries imitate it if they ask us to

13% Our Constitution would not be especially helpful to other countries

2% Don't Know

Compared to other Americans, do you think the following groups of people have more appreciation for the Constitution and its rights and freedoms, less appreciation, or is there no difference?

	More Appreciation	Less Appreciation	No Difference	Don't Know
Q16 – The World War II generation	78%	6%	13%	4%
Q17 – Immigrants	57%	23%	13%	7%
Q20 – Young Adults [If needed: By young adults, we mean people 18 to 29 years old.]	6%	75%	16%	3%

Q21 – The Constitution has a Bill of Rights that guarantees many rights and freedoms. In your opinion, should these rights and freedoms be complete and absolute, or should they also come with limits and responsibilities?

24% Should be complete and absolute

73% Should also come with limits and responsibilities

3% Don't Know

Q22 – And do you think that these rights and freedoms were meant to never change, or were they meant to change with the times?

35% Meant to never change

62% Meant to change with the times

3% Don't Know

Q23 – Ideally, do you think that the fundamental purpose of the Constitution is to protect and serve the interests of all people, regardless of their wealth or power, or to protect and serve the interests of people who are powerful or rich?

91% To protect and serve the interests of all people, regardless of their wealth or power

8% To protect and serve the interests of people who are powerful or rich

1% Don't Know

Q24 – And in reality, would you say that all citizens actually have the same rights and freedoms offered in the Constitution, or that citizens who are rich or powerful have more of them?

34% All citizens actually have the same rights and freedoms

65% Citizens who are rich or powerful have more of them

2% Don't Know

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Q25 – Some people say that when the Constitution was originally written over 200 years ago it had virtually no regard for the rights of African Americans or women. In your opinion, does this mean:

76% That the Constitution is a great document that had some blind-spots

11% That the Constitution is a fundamentally flawed or racist document

11% [VOL.] Neither

3% Don't Know

Please tell me if you agree or disagree with each of the following statements about the United States and its government. [PROBE: Is that strongly or somewhat?] [INSERT Q27 – Q35 RANDOMLY]

	Total Agree	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree	Total Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't Know
Q33 – After the terrorist attacks on America, it's more important than ever to know what our Constitution stands for	**90%**	76%	14%	**9%**	6%	3%	1%
Q31 – Decisions in the United States should follow the will of the majority, but the rights of the minority should always be protected	**87%**	65%	22%	**11%**	6%	5%	2%
Q27 – One of this country's greatest strengths is its reliable legal process— disagreements are settled in the court rather than in the street	**81%**	49%	32%	**18%**	10%	8%	1%
Q30 – As long as so many Americans are poor or homeless, our nation has failed to live up to its ideals	**57%**	39%	18%	**41%**	17%	24%	2%
Q34 – In many ways, members of minority groups have more protections and rights than white people do	**45%**	24%	21%	**52%**	24%	28%	3%
Q35 – In many ways, members of minority groups face more limits on their freedoms than white people do	**44%**	21%	23%	**51%**	23%	28%	5%

Q36 – Which of these would you say is the biggest threat to the constitutional rights and freedoms of Americans?

36% More and more government power intruding on our rights and freedoms

31% Foreign enemies trying to attack our country and our way of life

30% Ordinary citizens taking their rights and freedoms for granted

2% [VOL] None of these

2% Don't Know

Q37 – Which of these do you count on most to protect our constitutional rights and freedoms?

35% Ordinary citizens because they will not accept violations of their own rights

31% The government and the courts because it's their job to defend our rights

19% Civil liberties groups because they will fight to protect our rights

8% The press because reporters will expose violations of our rights

3% [VOL] None of these

3% Don't Know

Q38 – Sometimes the courts have to rule about constitutional disagreements like whether public schools can display the Ten Commandments or whether the government can listen in on prisoners talking to their lawyers. For the most part, do you think:

52% That these disagreements reflect serious debates over important issues

42% That these disagreements are overblown and too much is made of them

3% [VOL] Neither

3% Don't Know

Q39 – Do you believe that the right to privacy is currently under serious threat, is it basically safe, or has it already been lost?

41% Is currently under serious threat

34% Is basically safe

24% Has already been lost

2% Don't Know

Q40 – Which of these would you say is the biggest threat to your own personal right to privacy these days? Is it:

57% Banks and credit card companies, because they are collecting and selling marketing information about consumers

29% The federal government, because it can secretly collect information about people's private lives

8% Law enforcement agencies, because they are using more aggressive tactics against crime like surveillance cameras in public areas

4% [VOL.] None of these

3% Don't Know

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Q41 – Suppose an FBI agent is observing an Internet chat room and comes across a discussion among people who appear to be planning a terrorist attack. Which of these do you think the agent should do?

20% Immediately arrest the participants

50% Get court permission to further investigate them

25% Keep a closer eye on the chat room before doing anything

4% The FBI has no right to be observing Internet chat rooms

1% Don't Know

Q42 – As a result of the fight against terrorism, some experts on civil liberties warn that the government has given too much power to law enforcement to snoop on people's private lives. In your opinion, has the government already crossed the line in violating an individual's right to privacy, is it threatening to cross the line, or is this not a serious threat to the right to privacy?

21% Has already crossed the line in violating the right to privacy

33% Is threatening to cross the line

42% This is not a serious threat to the right to privacy

1% [VOL.] Right to privacy has already been lost

3% Don't Know

When it comes to each of the following rights, please tell me if you think we have gone too far as a society in expanding this right, if we have restricted it too much, or if things are OK the way they are. [INSERT Q43-50 RANDOMLY]

	Gone Too Far In Expanding	Restricted It Too Much	Things Are OK The Way They Are	Don't Know
Q48 – Freedom of the press	43%	8%	48%	2%
Q43 – The right to own firearms	32%	26%	40%	3%
Q47 – The right to due process and legal protections for people accused of crime	28%	16%	52%	5%
Q46 – Freedom of religion	13%	24%	61%	2%
Q45 – The right to freely express your views	13%	17%	68%	2%
Q44 – The right to protest or criticize the government	13%	19%	66%	2%
Q50 – The right to live your life the way you choose	13%	18%	67%	2%
Q49 – The right to vote	7%	10%	81%	2%

Q53 – Do you think the writers of the Constitution intended our government to be slow moving, fast moving, or don't you know enough to say?

31% Slow moving

25% Fast moving

39% Don't know enough to say

5% Don't Know

Q55 – Which comes closest to your view about the criminal justice system?

50% It's just as important to protect the rights of the accused as it is to put guilty people in jail

29% Putting guilty people in jail should be the most important goal of the criminal justice system

18% Even if this means some guilty people are let go, it's important to protect the rights of the accused

2% [VOL.] None of these

2% Don't Know

Q57 – When people are caught trying to enter the United States illegally, which do you think would be a better government policy?

61% To immediately send them back to their home country

35% To allow them to appeal their case using legal representation and a court hearing

3% [VOL.] Neither

1% Don't Know

Q58 – Which of these statements comes closest to your view?

43% Abortion should be generally available to those who want it

34% Abortion should be available but under stricter limits than it is now

21% Abortion should not be permitted

2% Don't Know

Q59 – Suppose that a group of anti-abortion protesters wants to hold a peaceful demonstration across the street from a family planning clinic where abortions take place. Do you think this is within their rights, is it going beyond their rights, or is this too tough to call?

73% Within their rights

13% Beyond their rights

13% Too tough to call

1% Don't Know

Q60 – Now suppose that the anti-abortion protesters want to stand right next to the entrance to the clinic and shout their beliefs about abortion. Do you think this is within their rights, is it going beyond their rights, or is this too tough to call?

17% Within their rights

70% Beyond their rights

13% Too tough to call

1% Don't Know

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Q62 – Suppose that the anti-abortion protesters take pictures of the people going into the clinic, and put them on the Internet with their names and addresses. Do you think this is within their rights, is it going beyond their rights, or is this too tough to call?

5% Within their rights

89% Beyond their rights

6% Too tough to call

1% Don't Know

Q63 – Now suppose that the store owners next to this clinic complain that the protesters are disrupting their business because customers are avoiding the area. The store owners want the courts to limit the protest to certain hours of the day. Do you think the courts should decide in favor of the store owners, in favor of the protesters, or is this too tough to call?

64% In favor of the store owners

9% In favor of the protesters

27% Too tough to call

1% Don't Know

Q64 – How much sympathy and compassion do you have for homeless people? Would you say you have a lot, some, a little or none?

48% A lot of sympathy and compassion

37% Some

11% A little

3% None

1% Don't Know

Q66 – Imagine a homeless man who has been living on the streets for a few years. He refuses to go to a shelter or to accept help, but he has never bothered anyone. Do you think it's his right to be left alone and live the way he chooses, should the police take him off the streets, or is this too tough to call?

74% It's his right to be left alone and live the way he chooses

9% The police should take him off the streets

17% It's too tough to call

1% Don't Know

Q67 – Now suppose that his behavior seems disturbed and that he sometimes verbally threatens other people. Still, he has never attacked or hurt anyone. Do you think it's his right to be left alone and live the way he chooses, should the police take him off the streets, or is this too tough to call?

20% It's his right to be left alone and live the way he chooses

54% The police should take him off the streets

26% It's too tough to call

* Don't Know

Q68 – Now suppose that several homeless people are constantly hanging out in a local shopping area. The store owners complain that they are driving away customers and want the police to move them away. Do you think the homeless people should be left alone to live the way they choose, should the police move them out of the area, or is this too tough to call?

8% They should be left alone to live the way they choose

71% The police should move them out of the area

20% This is too tough to call

1% Don't Know

Q69 – Now suppose that a large number of homeless people are eating and sleeping in a park where families and children used to visit but now avoid. Do you think the homeless should be left alone to live the way they choose, should the police move them out of the park, or is this too tough to call?

17% They should be left alone to live the way they choose

51% The police should move them out of the park

31% This is too tough to call

2% Don't Know

As you probably know, security policies and procedures in the U.S. have been toughened as a result of the terrorist attacks of September 11th. The next few questions are about this.

Q70 – After the terrorist attacks, some of the people who were arrested for suspected connections to terrorism had no connection at all, but they WERE in the U.S. illegally. Which comes closer to your view about the rights of these people?

39% They should have the right to see an attorney and face charges quickly

58% They don't deserve such protections because they are here illegally to start with

1% [VOL.] Neither

2% Don't Know

Q71 – If airport officials decided to search passengers before they got on planes, would you want them to randomly pick passengers, to pick only those passengers with Arabic names or Middle Eastern appearance, or to pick only those passengers who are on a list of suspects?

58% Randomly pick passengers

11% Pick only those passengers with Arabic names or Middle Eastern appearance

25% Pick only those passengers who are on a list of suspects

6% Don't Know

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Q73 – As you may know, a new law has been passed that was designed to help the police hunt for terrorists. Under this new law, judges can now permit the FBI to secretly monitor conversations between prisoners or suspected terrorists and their lawyers, even though such conversations used to be protected as confidential. Which of these statements comes closer to your view about this law?

59% I think that this is a sensible way to get information about possible terrorist plots

35% I worry that this will violate a person's right to get private advice from their lawyers

3% [VOL.] Neither

3% Don't Know

Q74 – Which of these would you say is the main reason why law enforcement agencies did not prevent the terrorist attacks?

42% Law enforcement agencies did a bad job of analyzing the information they already had

42% These attacks were so unbelievable and unexpected that no one could have predicted them

10% Concern for civil liberties prevented law enforcement agencies from doing their job well

3% [VOL.] None of these

3% Don't Know

Q75 – Suppose that to prevent future terrorist attacks using planes, law enforcement officials wanted to screen and check the backgrounds of people who take flying lessons. Would you want them to:

92% Screen everyone taking lessons, regardless of their backgrounds or names

6% Screen only people who are from the Middle East or who have Arabic names

1% [VOL.] Neither

1% Don't Know

Q76 – Which of the following would you say worries you more?

49% That the country might get so caught up in fears of terrorism that we would give up too many of our rights and freedoms

40% That terrorists might hurt us because the country will let them take advantage of our rights and freedoms

6% [VOL.] Neither

5% Don't Know

Q77 – Do you think that people who are eligible to vote but never do so are failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship, or is this understandable because of the quality of candidates running for office these days?

68% Failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship

29% Understandable because of the quality of candidates

4% Don't Know

Q78 – Do you think that people who routinely avoid jury duty are failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship, or is this understandable given how busy people's lives are these days?

72% Failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship

25% Understandable given how busy people's lives are these days

3% Don't Know

Q79 – Do you think that people who never write or call their elected representatives about issues they care about are failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship, or is this understandable because elected officials don't pay attention anyway?

52% Failing to live up to the responsibilities of citizenship

43% Understandable because elected officials don't pay attention anyway

6% Don't Know

Demographic Questions

Q81 – How often do you read the newspaper– every day, a few times a week, once a week, less than once a week, or never?

50% Every day

24% A few times a week

13% Once a week

6% Less than once a week

6% Never

* Don't Know

Q82 – Are you the parent of any children who are under 18 years old, or not?

34% Yes, parent of child under 18 years old

66% No, not a parent

* Don't Know

Q83 – In your family, who takes care of most of the day-to-day needs of the children– is it mom, dad, is it equally split between the two of you, or is it someone else?

Base: Parent of child under 18 [n = 508]

52% Mom

7% Dad

40% Equally split

1% Someone else

* Don't Know

Q84 – Are you the parent of any adult children who are 18 years old or older, or not?

49% Yes, parent of adult children

51% No, not a parent of adult children

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Q85 – How often do you vote in Presidential elections– always, most of the time, sometimes, or never?

74% Always

11% Most of the time

6% Sometimes

10% Never

Q86 – Did you vote in the 2000 presidential election, did something prevent you from voting, or did you choose not to vote?

79% Yes, voted in 2000 presidential election

8% Something prevented you from voting

13% Chose not to vote

Q87 – When your children were young, did you ever take them to the voting booth with you on election day, or not?

Base: Parent [n = 1081]

41% Yes, have taken children to the voting booth

57% No, have not

2% Don't Know

Q88 – When you were a child, did your parents ever take you to the voting booth on election day, or not?

33% Yes, parents took me to voting booth

64% No, they did not

4% Don't Know

Q89 – Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent or something else?

29% Republican

34% Democrat

24% Independent

11% Something else

2% Don't Know

Q90 – Do you lean toward the Republican or Democratic party, or do you not lean either way?

Base: Independent [n = 347]

22% Republican

26% Democrat

51% Don't lean either way

1% Don't Know

Q93 – What is the highest level of school you completed?

6% Less than High School
28% High School graduate
19% Some College or Trade School, no degree
13% Associates or 2-year degree
19% Bachelor's or 4-year degree
14% Graduate/Professional degree
* Don't Know

Q94 – What is your age?

17% 18-29 years old
19% 30-39 years old
22% 40-49 years old
27% 50-64 years old
15% 65 or older
* Don't Know

Q95 – Would you describe yourself as an Evangelical Christian, or not?

45% Yes, would describe self as Evangelical Christian
53% No, would not
2% Don't know

Q96 – Were you born in the United States, or were you born in another country?

92% Born in the United States
9% Born in another country

Q97 – Which of these statements best describes you?

18% I have lived in a country other than the U.S. for an extended period of time
51% I have traveled outside the U.S., but have never lived in another country
31% I have never been outside the U.S.
* Don't Know

Q98 – Do you consider yourself Hispanic, white, black or African American, Asian or something else?

7% Hispanic
77% White
10% Black/African American
2% Asian
1% Native American
3% Something else (Specify)
* Don't Know

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Q99 – I'm going to read some ranges of annual household income. Please stop me when I read the one that describes your total household income in 2001.
[IF NEEDED: I know this is a personal question. Let me assure you that your answers are confidential.]

9%	$15,000 or Under
12%	$15,001 to $25,000
15%	$25,001 to $35,000
21%	$35,001 to $50,000
19%	$50,001 to $75,000
21%	Over $75,000
3%	Don't Know

Q100 – May we call you back another day if we have a quick follow-up question?

93%	Yes, you may call back
7%	No, you may not
*	Don't Know

REGION		URBANICITY		GENDER	
21%	Northeast	28%	Urban	50%	Male
23%	Midwest	49%	Suburban	50%	Female
35%	South	23%	Rural		
21%	West				

RELATED PUBLICATIONS

National Constitution Center

Constitutional Knowledge Poll

This 1997 poll found that only 5 percent of Americans can correctly answer 10 rudimentary questions about the Constitution. The first-ever comprehensive survey of constitutional knowledge, the poll was commissioned by the National Constitution Center (NCC) at the start of Constitution Week 1997, September 17-23. For results, see www.constitutioncenter.org.

Teen Poll

This nationwide telephone survey contacted 600 teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17. The survey was released prior to Constitution Week 1998 and compared teens' knowledge of the Constitution to their knowledge of pop culture. The survey results were released at a hearing of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, and Education and Related Agencies chaired by Senator Arlen Specter (R-PA). For results, see www.constitutioncenter.org.

United We UnderStand

The National Constitution Center has recently updated lesson plans from the Warren E. Burger Repository of Lesson Plans of 1987 with national standards and assessment tools for today's teaching needs. Each curriculum packet, sent free to schools for school year 2002-2003, includes selected lesson plans, bookmarks, and pocket Constitutions for 30 students. Available now by calling 215-923-0004.

Just Vote!

The National Constitution Center partnered with Champions of Caring, WHYY, the Temple University Beasley School of Law, the Philadelphia branch of the League of Women Voters, The Haverford School, and George Washington Carver School of Engineering and Science to create a service-learning curriculum for high school students. Piloted in Philadelphia in 2002, the curriculum includes six lesson plans for the classroom as well as instructions for community service. Available in January 2003 by calling 215-923-0004.

Public Agenda

Aggravating Circumstances: A Status Report on Rudeness in America

Steve Farkas and Jean Johnson with Ann Duffett and Kathleen Collins. Most Americans feel rudeness is on the rise in the United States. In a study funded by The Pew Charitable Trusts, 79 percent of Americans say that lack of respect and courtesy should be regarded as a serious national problem. Covering a myriad of issues from parents at their child's sporting events to aggressive driving and the aftermath of September 11th, this survey provides a rare snapshot of how contemporary Americans view each other and the treatment they receive from society. 2002. 58 pp. $10 ISBN#1-889483-75-3

Just Waiting to Be Asked? A Fresh Look at Attitudes on Public Engagement

Steve Farkas, Patrick Foley and Ann Duffett, with Tony Foleno and Jean Johnson. School district leaders say they are eager for public engagement in educational decision making, but the venue they rely on most—the school board meeting—is primarily seen as a vehicle for the most vocal and disgruntled citizens. Teachers, of all the groups

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surveyed, feel the most ignored. Parents and the public would like to see more community involvement, but two-thirds say they're comfortable leaving decisions to the professionals. But those who rate their schools poorly are more likely to want to get directly involved. 2001. 48 pp. $10. ISBN 1-889483-72-9

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